

# Overview of United Purpose's work in Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)

## Global WASH achievements 2009-2020



**4.98 million** people reached with access to safe drinking water



**17,250** water points, either constructed or rehabilitated



**11,844** communities declared Open Defecation Free



**1.08 million** toilets built, as a result of our interventions

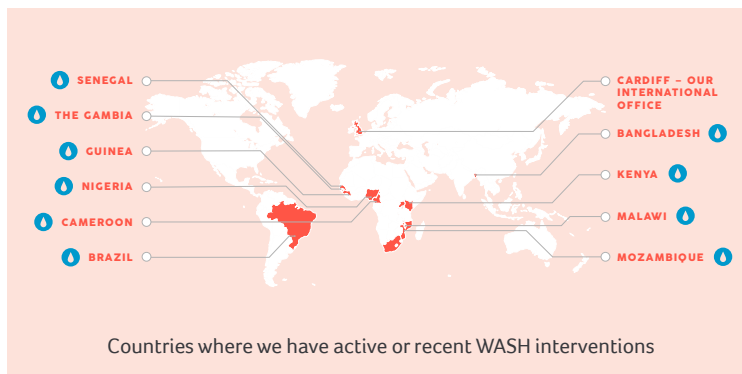


**2,404** schools with access to safe water

## Who we are

United Purpose is a UK-based international development charity with a goal to end poverty and inequality, and move people beyond aid. Founded in 1976 and formerly known as Concern Universal, UP is a leader in community-led development. Today we work across three continents, and our longstanding presence in many of the countries gives us a deep understanding of context, and strong relationships with partners, governments and local communities.

UP works across a range of sectors under four 'big issues': health, livelihoods, environment and tackling exploitation. Key programming sectors include food security and livelihoods, public health, disaster risk reduction, energy and environment, governance and social accountability, and WASH.



## Overview

UP's WASH portfolio includes large, stand-alone WASH projects, and multi-sectoral interventions with a WASH component.

Our work covers:

- Development-focused WASH interventions in communities, schools and healthcare facilities
- Strengthening markets for WASH products and services
- Wider governance and WASH systems strengthening
- Humanitarian and resilience-building interventions

As of May 2021, we have 122 staff working on WASH-related programming. Our [Global WASH Advisor](#) has 15 years' experience in the sector and supports our country programme teams. We have a vibrant organisation-wide WASH learning and coordination group, and a network of well-established partners in the countries where we work. Our WASH programming is supported

by a diverse range of donor-partners, such as foundations (e.g. the Vitol Foundation, the Waterloo Foundation and the One Foundation), institutional donors (such as FCDO, DFAT, the EU and SDC), UN agencies (such as UNOPS/SHF and UNICEF), non-profits (such as charity: water and Penny Appeal), and corporate social responsibility initiatives. We also receive revenues from the sale of our Gold Standard accredited, WASH-generated carbon credits.



## Our approach

Our WASH work supports our wider organisational aims of supporting people to live healthier, wealthier, safer and more climate-secure lives. We strive to enable sustainable, inclusive and resilient WASH services, at scale, through working at four different levels: community; local government; local WASH 'markets'; and the broader enabling environment. Our WASH activities are as diverse as the places in which we operate, and the balance between each of these four intervention levels varies by context.

### Improving access and sustainability of rural water supply services

To date, we have supported the construction or rehabilitation of over 17,000 water points, increasing access to safe water for nearly 5 million people. Sustainability is at the heart of our WASH work: we train and equip service providers (community-based or private) to manage these water services, and make sure they can access ongoing support and oversight, from local government, trained technicians and spare parts retailers. Together with specialist partners, we have been pioneers in the use of carbon finance to increase and sustain rural water supply services. We have generated carbon finance from hundreds of water points in Malawi and The Gambia, which helps us to ensure these water points continue to function well beyond our 'project' funding finishes.



### Increasing inclusion and social accountability in WASH service delivery

In many contexts that we work, there are considerable inequalities in terms of access to WASH services. We address these both in our community level work, and also through broader WASH systems strengthening. Upholding rights, and social accountability, are core elements of UP's global programming: since 2009, we have reached 9 million people with advocacy training and/or rights awareness. We work with communities to enable them to understand and better articulate their rights and concerns on WASH, and we build processes that hold government and WASH service providers to account. Our work in Mozambique provides forums for dialogue between local government, communities and service providers to discuss WASH issues, increasing transparency and accountability. In Malawi, we're engaging rights-based groups in local government planning processes, and increasing the evidence basis for planning, to allow better targeting of resources. In Brazil, our programming in João Pessoa city takes a rights-based and advocacy approach to improving WASH services in the marginalised Favela communities.



### Changing behaviours through innovative and gender-focused approaches

To date, over 1 million toilets have been constructed as a result of UP's interventions, primarily through people-centred approaches to WASH behaviour change, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). In Nigeria, our long-term support to the government's Open Defecation Free (ODF) strategy has benefited 1.7 million people and led to the first Local Government Area in the country becoming ODF. In Malawi, we've helped 3,120 villages become ODF – 22% of the total country ODF achievement. We take a creative approach to behaviour change communication, using sports, music and ICT to convey messages. For example, we used sport to engage children in WASH issues in our tennis programme in the slums of Kibera, Kenya, and we developed the 'Shasha Wathazi' toolkit, which uses play sessions to convey WASH messages in schools. We place a strong focus on gender in our WASH work. We've improved gender-friendly WASH facilities in over 2,400 schools, and our work on tackling taboos/practices in menstrual hygiene management, through local sanitary pad manufacture, behaviour change work and community dialogue, is benefitting thousands of women and girls.



### Strengthening the WASH 'System' for area-wide improvements

Our strong relationships with local governments enable us to co-identify systemic barriers to sustainable, inclusive, area-wide WASH services, and work with them to overcome these issues. We aim to build functional capacity and political will at the local government level, whilst working at the wider sector level, to influence policy and to scale-up our district-level successes. In Nigeria and Malawi, we support local authorities to develop strategic district-wide WASH plans, and advocate for budget allocation against these. In Nigeria this resulted in substantial increase in government funding for sanitation. In Malawi, we've helped the government map over 60,000 water points to help in evidence-based decision making, and we're working collectively with other organisations to test approaches to WASH systems strengthening. In both Nigeria and Mozambique, we are the NGO partners in government-led donor funded WASH programmes, where we provide technical support, quality assurance and oversight to donors and the government. Where applicable, our working modality is shifting from direct intervention, to co-delivery with government, to accountable and inclusive government-led delivery.







## Strengthening local markets for WASH products and services

Already a strong component of our Livelihoods and Sustainable Energy work, market-based approaches are increasingly becoming a key part of our WASH work. This is partly to increase access to WASH products and services, and partly to create jobs in WASH-related value chains. For water supply, we work with local mechanics and spare parts retailers to improve the quality and reach of their products and services. We build community demand for affordable hygiene and sanitation products, such as toilet slabs and water filters, and work with local businesses to supply them. In Malawi, we co-deliver such interventions together with our microfinance entity (CUMO), whose agents support the marketing of such products, and increase affordability through household loans. In Bangladesh, we've helped create a network of over 400 female-run social enterprises, who (amongst other services) socially market WASH products in remote rural areas, to a catchment of over 2 million people. In Brazil, we've worked with waste pickers to be more formally included in waste management, and provided them with training and equipment, improving their service offering and increasing their revenues.



## Responding to humanitarian needs, strengthening resilience

Since 2009, UP has provided emergency relief or supported disaster preparedness for 6.7 million people. Our established WASH capacities, agility and long-term country presence makes us well-placed to respond to humanitarian needs. For example, we supported 670,524 people in response to Cyclone Idai in 2019, and we've delivered WASH services in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh since 2017. Our cross-border response to Ebola in West Africa was praised by the President of Guinea, and we've pivoted many of our WASH programmes to mainstream COVID-19 preparedness and prevention. We are increasingly working on improving WASH conditions in health facilities, schools and market places, to increase resilience and reduce transmission risk in the event of epidemics. As a primarily development-focused organisation, we are well-placed to strengthen the so-called WASH 'Humanitarian-Development Nexus', applying longer-term thinking to disaster preparedness, response and recovery.



## For further information

Email: [up.uk@united-purpose.org](mailto:up.uk@united-purpose.org)

Address: United Purpose,  
14 Cathedral Road, Cardiff,  
CF11 9LJ, UK

Phone: +44 (0)2920 220 066

Website: [www.united-purpose.org/wash](http://www.united-purpose.org/wash)

## Increasing our impact through multi-sectoral interventions

As a multi-sectoral organisation, where possible we take an integrated or 'layered' approach to programming, aiming to maximise synergies and impact. Nutrition messages are often mainstreamed into our WASH behaviour change activities, and our WASH in schools often has a nutrition component, such as inclusion of student deworming in our 'Fit for Schools' programme in Guinea, or school nutrition gardens in our Blue Schools work in Bangladesh. Our environment work on forestry and protecting water catchments reinforces both our climate resilient agriculture work and also the sustainability of our water supply services. We are building the synergies between our solar energy work and our water supply work in Malawi. In Cameroon, where localised disputes between farmers and pastoralists sparks conflicts and population displacements, we use water-related interventions and dialogue processes to reduce water-related conflicts.



We are a proud member of key WASH networks such as RWSN, SuSanA, and serve on the steering committee of the UK WASH Network.



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