



The recipe for success:
how policy-makers can integrate water,
sanitation and hygiene into actions
to end malnutrition



Zara, 4, at the water point in her village, Bongolava region, Madagascar.

Credit: WaterAid/ Ernest Randriarimalala

Executive summary

In this report we analyse the approaches governments and donors are taking to cross-integrate nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) within their nutrition and WASH national policies and plans. The report aims to provide a ‘recipe’, or toolkit, to stimulate debate and discussion of the options and opportunities to bring together WASH and nutrition policies and programmes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a transformative agenda. To achieve them will require links between goals and aspects of sustainable development, and between domestic and international actions.

Multi-sectoral interventions are essential to address each of the underlying determinants of malnutrition, which include: WASH; agriculture; care practices; health; education; social protection; and other socio-economic factors. Improving any one of these underlying determinants in isolation is unlikely to significantly reduce stunting and wasting if other direct and underlying determinants are not also improved.

Comprehensive integration of different sectors under a multi-sectoral umbrella is not always

possible, so ensuring key sectors are nutrition-sensitive is also crucial. To be considered nutrition-sensitive and to have a sustained impact on nutrition, sectoral plans and programmes should incorporate specific nutrition goals and actions.

Existing guidelines and practical tools are useful for integrating nutrition and WASH at programme and project levels.¹ However, to transform these into large-scale investments and impact, governments must mainstream nutrition considerations into national policy frameworks and institutional structures. Nutrition policies and plans should include specific objectives and interventions of key contributing sectors such as WASH.

Likewise, inclusion of the right nutrition priorities and incentives in WASH policies will foster and support multiplication of nutrition-sensitive initiatives.

Although some countries and donors are making important progress towards more effective collaboration between WASH and nutrition actors, more action is urgently needed if the World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition targets and SDGs are to be met. This will require national governments and donors, and both nutrition and WASH actors, to shift mindsets; develop ambitious policies and plans; create effective coordination mechanisms and flexible funding; and share lessons and experiences globally.

Front cover: Ambi washing plates with clean water, Monze District, Zambia.
Credit: WaterAid/ Chileshe Chanda.

¹ For example, ACF (2017) *WASH/Nutrition: A practical guidebook*. www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/action_against_hunger_wash_nutrition_guidebook.pdf

Key recommendations

National governments should:

- Ensure policies and financing align with both the SDGs and their interconnected goals to strengthen WASH and nutrition coordination and collaboration, using opportunities such as policy reviews and joint sector reviews.
- Establish effective cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms championed at the highest level by heads of state, to support the sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate the meaningful participation of, and consultation with, civil society and affected communities.
- Ensure up-to-date national WASH and nutrition plans and progress reports are easily accessible online, to allow civil society to monitor progress and hold governments to account.

Nutrition policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Prioritise nutrition-sensitive WASH interventions and include specific objectives to improve WASH within their nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improving provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-locating interventions to areas with lowest WASH access and highest prevalence of undernutrition.

WASH policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Increase the 'nutrition-sensitivity' of policies and programmes, including by: targeting geographical areas where undernutrition

is most prevalent; prioritising women and children; and including nutrition-relevant interventions, such as improving WASH in health and nutrition centres.

Donor agencies should:

- Promote and fund multi-sectoral approaches, and incentivise more effective WASH and nutrition integration in humanitarian and development contexts.
- Prioritise flexible financing, capacity-building and convening power to support national governments to bring ministries and stakeholders together to develop joint nutrition and WASH programmes.
- Make financial commitments to nutrition-sensitive WASH a key priority of global and regional nutrition initiatives, including the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the Nutrition for Growth commitment-making process, and the forthcoming African Development Bank multi-sectoral nutrition action plan.
- Work with countries and institutions, and other sectoral teams internally, to document and share experiences to strengthen the evidence base to enable the scaling up of successful approaches.

Technical partners, civil society and global partnerships should:

- Support government-led efforts, and champion a learning-focused approach that incentivises governments to exchange challenges and successes.
- Support policy formulation, budget allocation and strengthening of the accountability loop, especially by civil society.

Students perform a handwashing demonstration for visiting supporters at their Primary School in Maputo, Mozambique.



Introduction

At current rates of progress, the world will not meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to end malnutrition by 2030.

In 2016's *The missing ingredients: are policy-makers doing enough on water, sanitation and hygiene to end malnutrition?* we analysed national nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) policies and plans, highlighting the urgent need for greater integration of WASH in nutrition policies and vice versa if this Goal is to be met. The analysis showed that inter-ministerial collaboration is crucial to fostering multi-sectoral approaches to improving nutrition while driving progress on reaching everyone, everywhere with WASH by 2030.

Poor WASH conditions negatively affect nutritional outcomes.¹ Failure to incorporate strategies to improve WASH access, especially to prevent sustained exposure to enteric pathogens, into undernutrition policies and programmes will therefore undermine efforts to sustainably improve nutrition outcomes.

In this follow-up to *The missing ingredients*, we analysed more countries, and further developed the criteria for analysing WASH plans. In addition, we reviewed key donor policies, strategies and programmes to examine how donor financing incentivises and supports WASH and nutrition integration. Together, the reports move the discussion forward from the need for multi-sectoral approaches, towards sharing examples of how national governments and donors can better coordinate and integrate nutrition and WASH programmes.

Key statistics

- **50% of undernutrition** is associated with infections caused by poor WASH.²
- **A quarter of all stunting** is attributed to five or more episodes of diarrhoea during the first two years of life.³
- Estimates suggest that **poor sanitation** is the second leading cause of stunting worldwide.⁴

Global WASH stats:⁵

- **844 million** people without access to clean water.
- **2.1 billion people** lack access to safe, readily available water at home, and **4.5 billion** lack safely managed sanitation.

Global nutrition stats:⁶

- **155 million children** under five are stunted.
- **52 million children** under five are wasted.

Timara with her daughter Wutinesh, washing with clean water in Konso, Ethiopia.

'Nutrition specific actions have a potential for reducing up to 20% of the under-five stunting. The remaining 80% should be tackled by nutrition sensitive actions. One of the most important of these 'nutrition sensitive' interventions is WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene.'

European Commission, water and sanitation policy⁷

Methodology

Countries were selected for: 1) their membership of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership; the presence of author organisations' (ACF, WaterAid, SHARE) programmes; and 2) the availability of up-to-date plans. **Ten countries were included: Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Laos, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.**

The missing ingredients includes a detailed description of the methodology, which is summarised here. Tables 1 and 2 outline, respectively, the criteria used to assess nutrition and WASH plans.^{ii *}

Table 1:
Criteria to assess nutrition plans

1. WASH included in background analysis
2. All three components of WASH included (water, sanitation and hygiene)
3. WASH objective included (as one of the overarching/key objectives of the plan)
4. WASH interventions included (e.g. overall approach, infrastructure investments, behaviour change)
5. WASH roles and responsibilities defined
6. Comprehensive WASH interventions included (i.e. the WASH interventions most important for nutrition, such as BabyWASH,ⁱⁱⁱ food hygiene and hygiene-related behaviours)
7. WASH indicators and targets included
8. WASH budget included
9. WASH ministries involved in developing the plan
10. Institutional structures and coordination mechanisms include WASH stakeholders/ ministry representatives

Table 2:
Criteria to assess WASH plans

1. Nutrition included in background analysis; link between WASH and nutrition defined
2. WASH interventions targeted towards areas affected by undernutrition
3. Nutrition objectives included (plan aims to tackle undernutrition as a specific objective)
4. Nutrition-related interventions included (e.g. WASH minimum package in health and nutrition centres)
5. Institutional structures and coordination mechanisms include nutrition stakeholders/ministries responsible

For the donor analysis, we prioritised understanding the degree to which WASH is included within nutrition policies. Documents including nutrition strategies, policies and programme resources were reviewed. In future analyses, it will be important to review donor WASH strategies to understand the extent to which WASH programmes are being designed and positioned as nutrition-sensitive.

Table 3:
Donor agencies reviewed

Multilateral institutions

African Development Bank, EU, UNICEF, World Bank

Bilateral national donors

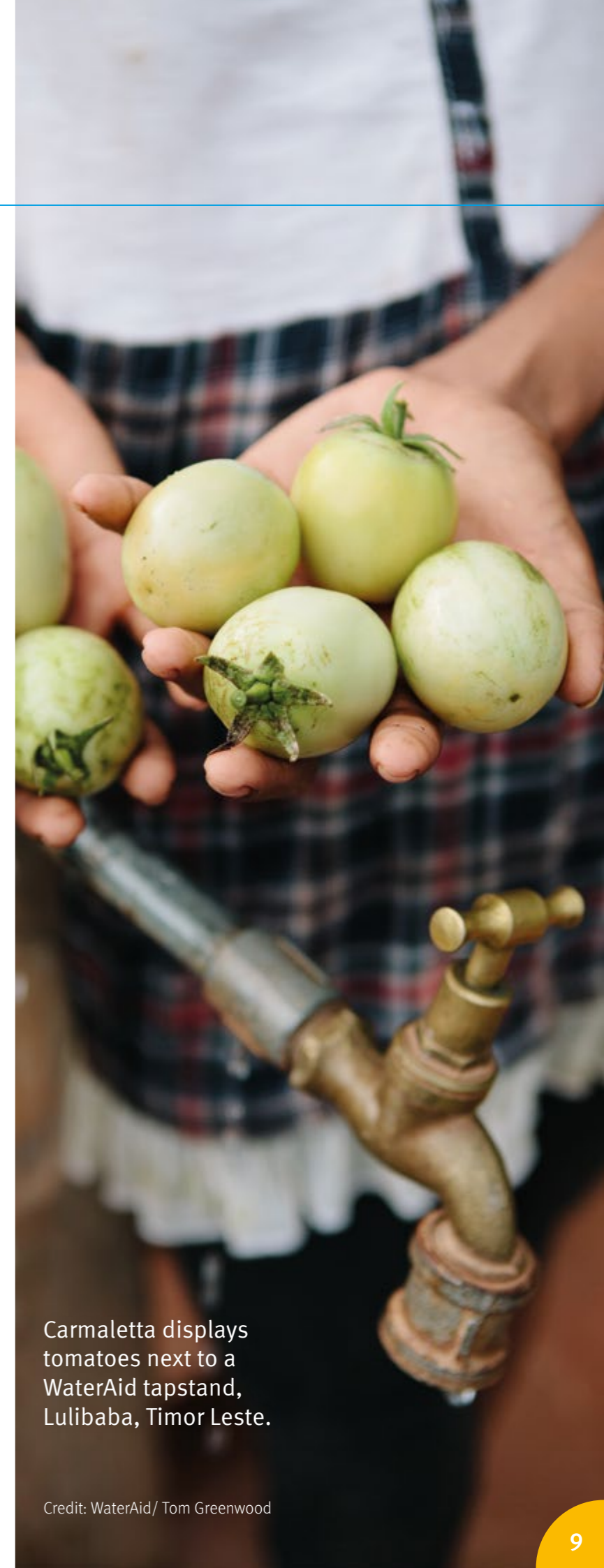
Canada, Germany, Japan, UK, USA

Private/philanthropic foundations

The Children's Investment Fund Foundation, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Global platforms (non-financial support)

Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) joint partnership



Carmaletta displays tomatoes next to a WaterAid tapstand, Lulibaba, Timor Leste.

ⁱⁱ *The missing ingredients* analysed both policies and plans. Where possible, this report focuses specifically on plans, which usually provide more operational detail.

ⁱⁱⁱ BabyWASH interventions are baby-centred interventions designed to prevent exposure to pathogens (for example, safe children's play areas, complementary food hygiene, safe disposal of child faeces).

* The appendix (available at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess) includes examples across the criteria and countries.

Key findings

Table 4: Findings from the analysis of nutrition plans and policies



Country	Plans/policies	Assessment criteria													
		1. Is WASH included in background analysis?	2. Are all three components of WASH included?	3. Are any WASH objectives included?	4. Are WASH interventions included?	5. Are WASH roles/responsibilities outlined?	6. Are comprehensive WASH interventions included?	7. Are WASH indicators and targets outlined?	8. Is a WASH budget included?	9. Are WASH Ministries involved in developing the plan?	10. Do institutional structures include WASH?				
Cambodia	National strategy for food security and nutrition (NSFSN 2014–2018)	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Chad	Politique nationale de nutrition et d'alimentation (PNNA) (National Nutrition and Food Policy [PNNA])	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
	Plan d'action intersectoriel de nutrition et d'alimentation (PAINA) (Intersectoral Action Plan for Nutrition and Food [PAINA])	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Ethiopia	National Nutrition Plan 2016–2020	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Ghana	National Nutrition Policy (2014–2017)	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	
Laos	National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan of Action 2016–2020 (NNSPA)	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
Mali	Politique nationale de nutrition (2013) (National Nutrition Policy [2013])	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
	Plan d'action multisectoriel de nutrition, 2014–2018 (Multi-sectoral Nutrition Action Plan [2014–2018])	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
Namibia	Multi-sectoral nutrition implementation plan, results framework and dashboard of indicators (June 2013)	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Niger	Politique Nationale de Sécurité Nutritionnelle au Niger (2016–2025) (National Nutritional Security Policy [2016–2025])	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
	Politique nationale de nutrition (2012–2021) (National Nutrition Policy [2012–2021])	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Nigeria	National Strategic Plan of Action for Nutrition (2014–2019)	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Unknown / insufficient information	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
	National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria (2016)	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe National Nutrition Strategy (2014–2018)	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Partially integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	Well integrated	

Key findings (continued)

Key: ● Well integrated ● Partially integrated
● Needs improvement ● Unknown / insufficient information

Table 5: Findings from the analysis of WASH plans and policies

Country	Plans/policies	Assessment criteria					
		1. Is the link between WASH and nutrition defined?	2. Do WASH interventions target areas affected by undernutrition?	3. Are nutrition objectives included in the plan?	4. Are nutrition-related interventions included in the plan?	5. Do institutional structures and coordination mechanisms include nutrition?	
Cambodia	National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (2011–2025)	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	
Chad	Politique et stratégie nationale d'assainissement (National Sanitation Policy and Strategy)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	
	Schéma directeur de l'eau et de l'assainissement (SDEA) (Water and Sanitation Masterplan [SDEA])	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	
Ethiopia	One WASH National Program (2013)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	
Ghana	National Environmental Sanitation Strategy and Action Plan (2010)	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	
Laos	National Water Supply and Environmental Health Programme (2004)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Unknown / insufficient information	
Mali	Politique nationale de l'Eau (2006) (National Water Policy [2006])	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	
	Politique nationale d'assainissement (2009) (National Sanitation Policy [2009])	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	
Namibia	National Sanitation Strategy (2011/12–2014/15)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Well integrated	Unknown / insufficient information	
Niger	Stratégie opérationnelle de promotion de l'hygiène et de l'assainissement de base au Niger (SOPHAB) (Operational Strategy for the Promotion of Hygiene and Basic Sanitation in Niger [SOPHAB] 2014–2018)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
	Programme sectoriel Eau, Hygiène et Assainissement (PROSEHA) (2016–2030) (Water, Hygiene and Sanitation sector program PROSEHA [2016–2030])	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
Nigeria	Executive Summary of the Nigeria Water Sector Roadmap (2011)	Well integrated	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	Partially integrated	
Zimbabwe	Strategy To Accelerate Access To Sanitation And Hygiene (2011–2016)	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Partially integrated	Needs improvement	

Findings: country analysis

1. Integration of WASH within national nutrition plans

- **Few plans prioritise WASH with a specific objective**

Across the policies and plans analysed, WASH is frequently recognised as an important underlying determinant of undernutrition and all three aspects of WASH are incorporated, albeit to different degrees. However, only three countries include an overarching objective on WASH. Chad, for instance, recognises WASH as a priority strategic axis in the fight against undernutrition at all levels of action: households, schools and health centres. Many more countries reference WASH as a sub-component of specific objectives.

- **Different components of WASH are included**

In line with *The missing ingredients* findings, WASH interventions included in nutrition plans frequently mention infrastructural or behavioural components, but rarely integrate both. Very few plans outline WASH interventions integrated into nutrition interventions through a single delivery mechanism.

Several plans discuss behaviour change communication interventions, but these often focus on general handwashing with soap and food hygiene and rarely consider other WASH practices relevant to nutrition, such as BabyWASH interventions.⁸ Laos is one example where water and sanitation are to be delivered alongside nutrition interventions in education programmes. Chad explicitly mentions interventions aiming to scale up the WASH Nutrition strategy in all health centres,

and the training of all frontline health workers on this strategy.^{iv} Mali includes WASH aspects in the integrated emergency response and preparedness strategic axis of its multi-sectoral nutrition action plan.

No plans referenced the role of WASH in supporting treatment and management of severe or moderate acute malnutrition.

- **WASH budgets and ministry involvement vary greatly**

All country plans apart from Chad and Nigeria define roles and responsibilities for WASH-related activities. However, far fewer state the involvement of WASH ministries in developing nutrition plans and policies.

The detail of financing planned WASH interventions varies greatly, and several countries do not reference or include WASH budgets. Where nutrition plan budgets do reference WASH, the proportion of funds dedicated to it ranges from less than 4% in Laos and Ethiopia to 82.7% in Namibia.

We did not explore the implications for how this budget is used in practice. Despite the variation in budgets, government institutional coordination structures and mechanisms are a common feature across plans and policies. Many countries have established committees and working groups with participation from WASH ministries; however, the extent to which WASH representatives participate at all levels is unclear.

- **Cambodia, Zimbabwe and Niger lead the way**

Overall, the strongest integration of WASH into nutrition plans and policies is in Cambodia

and Zimbabwe (plans), and Niger (policy). These include specific WASH objectives, comprehensive WASH interventions, WASH indicators and targets, and WASH ministries consulted in strategy development. The institutional structures offer confidence for effective, high-level coordination between key stakeholders, and identify opportunities to integrate WASH with other key interventions aimed at improving nutrition practices.

Box 1: Niger

Niger's policy presents a comprehensive range of soft and hard interventions, including: community-led total sanitation; integration of a 'water and sanitation in nutrition' minimum package at community and institutional levels; and awareness-raising of, and advocacy for, the impact of WASH on nutrition.

2. Integration of nutrition in national WASH plans

- **Nutrition is rarely mentioned in WASH plans**

We analysed a variety of WASH plans.^v In general, they do not systematically address nutrition or refer to the importance of WASH in combatting undernutrition. Plans rarely mention nutrition in background analyses or the links between WASH and nutrition, with some exceptions, such as Cambodia, which includes specific reference to 'stunting from diarrhoea-related malnutrition'. Although several strategies

state that the poorest and most vulnerable households will be prioritised for service provision, they do not highlight undernutrition as an indicator of vulnerability, and WASH interventions do not deliberately target areas affected by undernutrition.

- **Nutrition-sensitive objectives and interventions**

WASH plans and policies rarely include nutrition goals. Ghana, for instance, includes an objective to raise awareness of the benefits of improved environmental sanitation, particularly in relation to health, food hygiene and general environment. Although most plans do not explicitly aim to reduce undernutrition, some include nutrition-sensitive objectives and interventions, for example: prioritising health centres and schools; integrated hygiene and sanitation approaches such as hygienic use of toilets, safe disposal of child faeces, and hygiene behaviour change; improving food hygiene; and contributing to food security.

- **Institutional mechanisms and joint planning**

In general, the extent to which nutrition representatives are involved in the development of WASH plans and policies is vague and only briefly mentioned. Some potential collaboration between ministries responsible for WASH and nutrition is implied, but the level of coordination is unclear. Although WASH plans incorporate nutrition-sensitive actions to varying degrees, synergistic approaches to nutrition and WASH (for example, targeting, coordination and sensitisation) are lacking and could be reinforced through institutional dialogue and coordination mechanisms.

^{iv} There are five main pillars of the WASH Nutrition strategy initially designed by West and Central Africa WASH Regional Group in 2012, with the support of many partners, and adapted in 2015: 1) target areas affected by undernutrition; 2) focus on the mother-malnourished child unit; 3) reinforce the WASH minimum package in health, nutrition centres and household levels; 4) increase emphasis on behaviour change; and 5) improve coordination.

^v Four national sanitation plans (Chad, Ghana, Mali, Namibia); two national sanitation and hygiene plans (Niger, Zimbabwe); three national water plans (Laos, Mali, Nigeria); one water and sanitation master plan (Chad); and two national WASH plans (Cambodia, Ethiopia), one of which was specific to rural settings (Cambodia).

The right ingredients: approaches to effective collaboration

The results of the analysis in this report of ten further countries reinforce the findings from *The missing ingredients* and resources to date^{9,10} – that no single blueprint exists for mutual embedding of WASH and nutrition in policies and programmes.

Rather: 1) there are various entry points for integration, depending on the national context; and 2) the extent of joint working between WASH and nutrition actors ranges from collaboration to coordination to integration along a continuum, depending on how conducive the policy environment and institutional arrangements are to cross-sectoral work in a country.

A clear understanding of the specific purpose and benefits of integrating nutrition and WASH policies and plans is crucial to clarify and align goals and actions across sectors.

The findings suggest several key entry points and processes that seem to support greater collaboration, including:

- **A supportive enabling environment**

Strong national policies and plans that mandate collaboration, institutional integration mechanisms, and political will are essential ingredients in driving collaboration. Institutional mechanisms tend to exist to some degree but

how they operate is affected by factors such as personalities, funding streams and ways of working. Strengthening these mechanisms can overcome barriers to working together and inform cross-sectoral planning and implementation – for example, through creation of specific technical working groups, establishing focal points and knowledge brokers, mandating in job responsibilities, involvement in the other sector's joint sector review or regular information exchange.

- **Ensuring policy coherence**

The analysis shows examples of countries with good integration of WASH in nutrition plans but with no reference to nutrition in WASH plans. Implementing the 2030 Agenda and its interconnected goals requires strong cooperation and mutual responsibility. Both nutrition and WASH stakeholders have a role in ensuring their key issues and objectives are properly taken into account by the other to enable policy coherence. Defining clear roles will avoid responsibilities being diluted among stakeholders.

- **Getting the detail right**

Most nutrition plans recognise the importance of WASH for nutrition, but many lack detail about which WASH actions are to be prioritised and how to practically integrate them into nutrition programmes. Similarly, WASH plans lack detail on actions to maximise nutrition impact, for example through co-location or co-targeting of WASH services to populations most vulnerable to undernutrition. Since integration is considered along a continuum, small, achievable changes can be made initially to bring nutrition and WASH programmes closer together (for example, Box 2 on page 18).



Daniel, midwife at Kiomboi District Hospital, Iramba District, Tanzania.

The right ingredients: approaches to effective collaboration (continued)

Box 2: Cambodia

The Cambodian Government is taking urgent action to speed up progress towards the WHA target for stunting. Its national strategy for food security and nutrition (NSFSN) 2014–2018 recognises WASH as a priority issue under ‘use and utilisation of food’ – one of four areas under the food security and nutrition conceptual

framework, alongside food availability, food access and food security. The plan identifies key opportunities to integrate related activities, such as WASH aspects in all child and maternal nutrition community and behaviour change programmes, and to integrate nutrition, hygiene and sanitation topics in school curricula.

• From policies to implementation

Policies need to be translated into clear actions that are delivered in practice. Factors such as policies not having an action plan with clear roles and responsibilities, lack of available or dedicated funding, lack of dynamism of consultative frameworks, ineffective multi-stakeholder platforms, and poor dissemination and decentralisation of documents can all contribute to policies not translating into concrete actions at local levels.

• Entry points for integrated delivery:

• **Behaviour change** is key to both WASH and nutrition programmes. The design and delivery of behaviour change interventions therefore offer an obvious entry point for collaboration as a way to enhance effectiveness and coverage while pooling expertise and resources. WASH and nutrition stakeholders could work together to identify the most important common areas to promote behaviour change (for example food hygiene, care practices, exclusive breastfeeding) and harmonise their approaches when targeting the same population. Using an integrated approach to behaviour change should

reduce overburdening and complexity in messaging and increase the chances of adopting promoted practices.

• **From a WASH perspective, targeting and co-locating programmes** to areas of high undernutrition could have the greatest impact on undernutrition by focusing on the most vulnerable populations. Modelling work such as that by the World Bank¹¹ which maps geographical areas with low WASH coverage and underlying health and nutrition vulnerabilities can identify very specific geographical areas to prioritise, especially in low-resource settings.

• Integrating WASH interventions into both undernutrition prevention and treatment

WASH is essential to preventing undernutrition. On the treatment side, results of recent studies show that a combination of WASH services and hygiene awareness-raising, delivered at household level, consistently improves the efficacy of treatment (researched), and may have a positive effect on relapse and the cost-effectiveness of the approach (under research).¹²



Pupils running in front of their sanitation block, Ankazobe district, Madagascar.

Credit: WaterAid/ Ernest Randriarimalala

• Creating the right incentives

Although integration of WASH and nutrition should be seen as mutually beneficial, achieving nutrition impact goals fundamentally depends on multiple sectors, including WASH. Incentives to work across sectors exist naturally for nutrition; however, since the WASH sector primarily measures progress by service coverage, achievement of its goals does not rely on nutrition programmes. This imbalance of incentives between nutrition and WASH may partly explain the differences in the extent to which WASH and nutrition are embedded into each other's plans.

• Understanding the barriers for cross-sectoral work, and what incentives exist or can be created

– especially the added value of improving the nutrition sensitivity of WASH programmes and implementing integrated programmes – can encourage new ways of working and greater cross-sectoral action.¹³ Funding, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability, can be designed to create incentives for working together.

The role of donors: an important ingredient

The SDGs demand enhanced global, national and local multi-sectoral partnerships. This will require new and different ways of working. Donors must not reinforce silos – they should offer financing, technical expertise, capacity-building, and convening power to strengthen cross-sectoral approaches in support of national governments' development efforts.

Several promising donor-supported initiatives that can accelerate learning and implementation of integrated WASH and nutrition approaches are underway (see map p22). Many are in the formative stages, but they reflect the breadth of roles donors can play, including:

- **Financing**

Ambitious high-level financing commitments to nutrition-sensitive investments, such as the EU's €3.1 billion commitment (see map), signal recognition of different sectors' roles in improving nutrition, and must be used as an incentive to drive integrated approaches by national governments.¹⁴ At the implementation level, flexible and long-term financing aligned with national costed plans to integrate nutrition and WASH, such as that by USAID (see map), can both deliver improved health outcomes and contribute towards the evidence base for the added value of more integrated approaches.

- **Convening power**

Through their strong relationships with multiple government ministries and other stakeholders at national, regional and global levels, donors can help to galvanise more effective coordination. For example, several donors and partners^v came together under the leadership of the Cambodian Government's Council of Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) to establish a national-level WASH and nutrition working group, and to organise the first ever national conference on nutrition and WASH in November 2016. Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation was also key in bringing together nutrition and WASH actors in many global fora to develop shared approaches.

- **Research and evidence**

Some donors have resisted financing multi-sectoral and nutrition-sensitive programming because, they argue, the evidence base is not yet strong enough. This stems from longstanding difficulties of measuring the health effects of WASH interventions, which do not lend themselves to the gold standard of randomised controlled trials (for example: the unit of measurement is often the community not household; studies lack an adequate control group).^{15,16} The links between WASH and health are not disputed; however, questions remain around the specific contribution of different WASH interventions and the feasibility of scaling up these approaches. Donors can play a vital role by funding operational research and helping to document and share good programme practice.

- **Global governance and technical support**

National governments look to international institutions for guidance, standards and good practice. It is vital that UN and donor agencies shape processes, partnerships and initiatives that will drive cross-sectoral collaboration. The partnership agreement between the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership is driving progress towards more integrated global governance. The SUN–SWA partnership prioritises joint advocacy, documenting good practices, research and learning to strengthen the case for integrated approaches, and directly supporting national efforts.

Missed opportunities

Despite some good examples, donors are too often missing key opportunities to drive a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition. The World Bank's Investment Framework for Nutrition, for example, focuses only on the cost of investing in high-impact nutrition-specific investments to reach the World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition targets. Although the Framework's analysis recognises the critical contribution of nutrition-sensitive sectors to achieving the WHA targets, it places undue emphasis on the cost of scaling up nutrition-specific interventions, miscommunicating that this is the cost required to meet the WHA targets.¹⁷ Similarly, the Canadian Government's approach to nutrition seems to argue that micronutrient deficiency can be tackled through nutrition-specific interventions alone, neglecting the effect that sustained exposure to faecal pathogens has on the body's ability to absorb nutrients.¹⁸

Donors have a vital role in accelerating new and innovative ways of working to drive effective multi-sectoral action and investment. There are many upcoming opportunities for ambitious leadership on this agenda, including the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the 'Nutrition for Growth' commitment-making process, the African Development Bank's forthcoming multi-sectoral nutrition action plan, and the Japanese Government's Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (IFNA).

^v WaterAid, Save the Children, the Global Sanitation Fund, Plan International, UNICEF, World Food Programme, WHO, Helen Keller International and the World Bank.

The role of donors: an important ingredient (continued)

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has a stated focus on research and innovation to 'understand the full range of causes of malnutrition, identify the right packages of interventions, and establish the best times to intervene'. This lends itself to strengthening the evidence base for integrated programmes, including through operational research.¹⁹ The Foundation's focus on a select number of countries with a high burden of malnutrition also represents a focus on the countries with most people lacking access to WASH (e.g. Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria).

Children's Investment Fund Foundation

The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), a key donor for nutrition and a partner of the innovative 'Power of Nutrition' partnership, focuses on addressing stunting.²⁰ CIFF's investments in nutrition have historically focused on nutrition-specific interventions, but it shows some evidence of moving towards nutrition-sensitive interventions, such as the project promoting handwashing to reduce child mortality and malnutrition in Bihar, India.²¹

UK Department for International Development

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has been instrumental in driving greater investment in nutrition through the 'Nutrition for Growth' commitment-making process first hosted in London in 2013. DFID recently stated that it has ten WASH projects underway aiming to improve nutrition outcomes for women, girls and children across 20 countries.²⁵ DFID's new (unpublished as of August 2017) nutrition strategy could help to finance and scale up integrated programmes in the countries with highest burdens of undernutrition and worst access to WASH.

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has been a champion and convener on WASH–nutrition integration at the global level. Collaborating closely with the German WASH network of NGOs, BMZ co-organised the Bonn WASH-Nutrition Forum in 2015, bringing together WASH and nutrition stakeholders using 'mirror sessions' to discuss greater coordination and integration.^{vii} Building on this, BMZ co-hosted a session at Stockholm World Water Week 2016 to build momentum for scaling up integrated programming.²⁶

USAID

The USAID multi-sectoral nutrition strategy emphasises the necessity of nutrition-sensitive action.²² In its focus on high-impact actions in the first 1,000 days, the strategy highlights the importance of WASH. It lists illustrative action areas such as improving the provision of WASH infrastructure, the joint promotion of food and hand hygiene, the availability and affordability of commodities such as soap, and multiple use water systems for domestic or personal use and production or agricultural use. The strategy also emphasises the need for multi-sectoral coordination and co-location, and commits to working with national governments to strengthen the evidence base and availability of data on effective nutrition-sensitive interventions.

UNICEF

UNICEF has committed to strengthening the two-way integration of its nutrition and WASH strategies and interventions. UNICEF's *'Approach to Scaling Up Nutrition for Mothers and their Children'* outlines a comprehensive set of nutrition-sensitive as well as nutrition-specific approaches, and recognises the need to increase synergy with WASH as a priority sector.²³ Meanwhile, UNICEF's *'Strategy for water, sanitation and hygiene 2016-2030'* recognises 'working inter-sectorally' – including on nutrition – as a 'Do Better' priority.²⁴ The WASH strategy notes there is 'a strong consensus in the WASH and nutrition sectors that WASH is an essential nutrition-sensitive intervention to address undernutrition'.

European Union

At 2013's Nutrition for Growth Summit, the EU pledged €3.5 billion for 2014–2020 to reduce stunting, of which €3.1 billion was allocated to nutrition-sensitive interventions, including WASH (although the exact proportion for WASH is unclear). The EU is prioritising building the evidence on high-impact and cost-effective nutrition-sensitive approaches, and has invested in the 'SHINE' trial in Zimbabwe, looking at the links between sanitation and nutrition. It has committed 'to integrate nutrition in sectors currently under-represented in the EU's work, such as...water/sanitation'.²⁷

Japan International Cooperation Agency

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has a crucial role as host of the Nutrition for Growth summit at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, and could call for strong financial commitments to nutrition-sensitive WASH as a priority. Meanwhile, JICA's new Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (IFNA) could be significant if it accomplishes its aim to achieve 'synergistic impacts among multiple sectors'.²⁸

African Development Bank

The African Development Bank, under the Presidency of Dr Akinwumi Adesina, has made nutrition and food security a top priority. The African Leaders for Nutrition initiative could champion the need for effective multi-sector and nutrition-sensitive action, using the AfDB's forthcoming Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan as the guiding framework.

^{vii} For more on the Bonn WASH Nutrition Forum, 11-12 November 2015, see www.washnet.de/en/wash-nutrition-forum-2015/

The recipe for success: a toolkit for integration

Ingredient	Methods
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure policy coherence so that WASH and nutrition are reflected and included in each other's policies and plans. • Engage multiple sectors and ministries in the development of policies, plans and implementation at national, district and local levels. • Strengthen transparency by making plans and policies publicly available and accessible online.
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WASH actors join SUN, and nutrition actors join SWA at national and global levels. Where these partnerships don't exist, actors join other relevant nutrition and WASH coalitions and working groups. • Use partnerships (such as the joint SUN–SWA partnership) to develop advocacy initiatives, share learning and facilitate country-level collaborations.
Human rights principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use these principles – including access to information, non-discrimination, prioritisation of the most vulnerable populations, participation, and accountability – as guidance for different sectors when designing and implementing national policies and plans.
Institutional mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure high-level political support for integrated cross-sectoral approaches, including coordination mechanisms under the leadership of heads of state. • Facilitate and strengthen institutional structures that meet regularly to plan and review progress. • Develop systems to share information and data. • Promote the involvement of multiple sectors and stakeholders in joint sector reviews.

Ingredient	Methods
Delivery mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the capacity and knowledge of frontline health workers, teachers and caregivers in the intersections between health, nutrition, education and WASH. • Strengthen community health worker outreach programmes (e.g. embedding hygiene promotion into routine immunisation, and integrated management of childhood illness approaches). • Use institutional settings as entry points for integrated programmes (e.g. healthcare facilities, schools, early childhood development centres).
Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use behaviour-change promotion as an entry point for integrating nutrition and WASH. • Focus on BabyWASH interventions including food hygiene, and environmental hygiene. • In addition to preventative approaches, include WASH interventions in the treatment and management of severe and moderate acute malnutrition (e.g. household water treatment kits, hygiene promotion to caregivers).
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure multi-sectoral nutrition and WASH plans are fully costed. • Ensure WASH resources are allocated within the overall nutrition budget or linked and referenced to the WASH budget and plan. • Ensure donor support is aligned behind costed multi-sectoral nutrition and WASH plans.
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), research and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and share common nutrition and WASH indicators, to reinforce co-responsibility. • Incorporate research, including operational research, into nutrition and WASH programmes. • Document programmatic experience and share lessons nationally, regionally and globally.



Tat, 12, and another student, wash their hands with soap, in their floating village, Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia.

Credit: WaterAid/ Laura Summerton

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At current rates of progress, the world will not meet the Sustainable Development Goal to end malnutrition by 2030.

In this report we assert that the integration of action on nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is fundamental to the recipe for success.

By analysing the approaches governments and donors are taking, we highlight ways in which progress is being made, and we call on decision-makers to shift mindsets, change ways of working, and invest now in effective integration to improve child health.

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