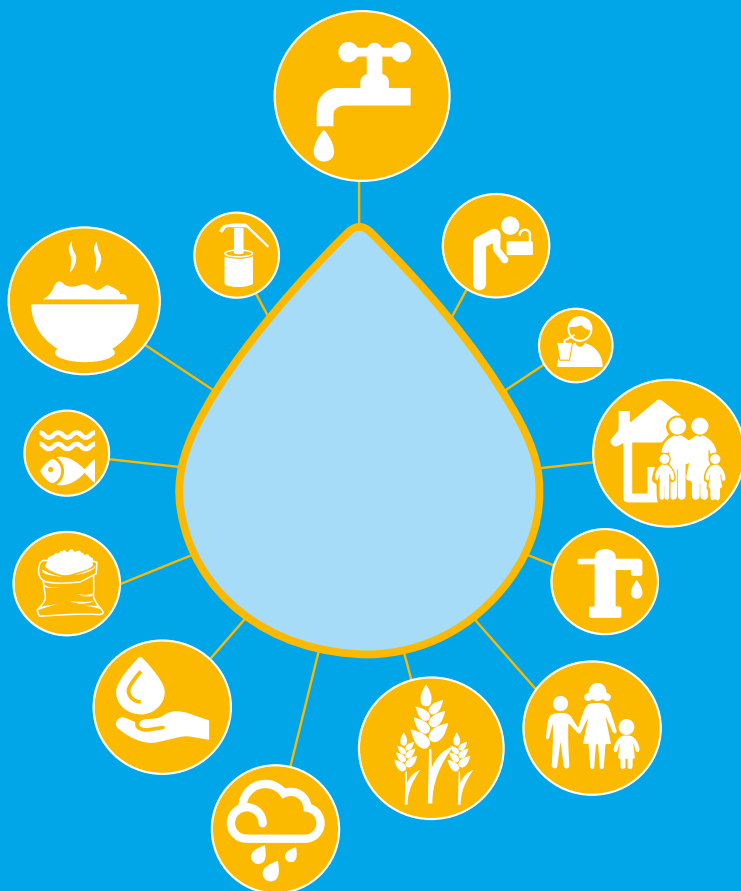


Executive Summary

STUDY ON WASH-NUTRITION BARRIERS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS



Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) has an important effect on nutrition status. Globally, around half of the burden of child under-nutrition is due to inadequate sanitation and hygiene. Yet many WASH programs do not recognise their potential effect on nutrition, while many nutrition initiatives do not include WASH. Integration of WASH and nutrition is therefore a promising strategy to improve nutrition outcomes.

A stakeholder consultation was conducted with key informants whose work relates to nutrition and/or WASH. Forty representatives from government agencies, development partners and civil society were interviewed, including national, provincial and district level staff. The purpose of the consultation was to identify current barriers to WASH and nutrition integration in Cambodia, and identify opportunities to address or overcome these barriers.



FINDINGS



Knowledge and learning: Stakeholders reported that there is a growing evidence base to support integration of WASH and nutrition, and increased awareness of the available evidence. This evidence has encouraged policymakers to discuss WASH-nutrition integration. Knowledge of the rationale for WASH-nutrition integration is becoming more widespread, however this rationale is not always understood in detail. Stakeholders are learning about WASH-nutrition integration both top-down, from global evidence, as well as bottom-up, from seeing the effects of integrated work at a community or household level. Meetings, trainings and workshops provide forums for learning, but are insufficient to foster progress towards integration – particularly at Sub-national level. Stakeholders also learn about WASH- nutrition integration by working together routinely with counterparts from different sectors, for example where WASH and nutrition personnel are colleagues who share the same manager. Specific technical guidance on how WASH contributes to nutrition and what WASH-nutrition integration looks like would support integration.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Knowledge and learning

Barriers to integration

- Time required to learn about WASH and nutrition linkages, in the context of competing priorities
- Lack of deep understanding about WASH and nutrition linkages
- Limited follow-up on technical discussions about WASH and nutrition linkages

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

Top priority:

- Appoint focal points who can accumulate knowledge about WASH and nutrition.

High priority:

- Generate local evidence for the links between WASH and nutrition, e.g. secondary analyses of data from pilot projects, and projects such as NOURISH that include control sites.

Additional recommendations:

- Disseminate technical guidance, endorsed by all key national stakeholders, on the links between WASH and nutrition.
- Provide opportunity to attend training courses for key staff members, e.g. focal points, and high-level staff with responsibilities for program design.
- Enhance institutional and organisational structure around learning events to support follow-up.

FINDINGS



Policy: The policy environment is siloed. While there are some strategies that draw together policies across multiple sectors, there is no single policy that relates to both WASH and nutrition. There are many policies relating to nutrition and WASH, and responsibility for these policies is split across multiple ministries. Due to the number of policies that already exist, developing any new policies for WASH-nutrition integration would only complicate the operating environment. At the same time, policy is an essential part of the enabling environment for WASH-nutrition integration. It is therefore necessary to prioritise the development of a policy framework that is supportive of integration. In order to develop a supportive policy framework without developing any new policies, it is possible to develop a strategy for WASH-nutrition integration, and map existing policies against this overarching strategy. However, policies are insufficient to cause change; to support WASH-nutrition integration, policies must include action plans, and be complemented by supportive institutional arrangements and funding at both national and Sub-national level.

© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood





© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/ Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Policy

Barriers to integration

- Time required to work across siloed policies and implementation structures
- Development partners replicate silos when aligning with government policy
- Doing work outside mandated sector-specific responsibilities is seen as a problem

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

Top priority:

- Develop a cross-sectoral strategy that outlines how existing WASH and nutrition policies contribute to integrated efforts to improve nutrition outcomes.
- Leverage existing policies to divide responsibilities relating to integrated work between different sectors.

Additional recommendation:

- Cost the WASH and nutrition-related components of existing policies, and use these costings as a basis for fund mobilisation.

FINDINGS



Leadership: Effective collaboration requires clear leadership. In order to ensure that leaders have sufficient time and resources to lead integration efforts, leadership responsibilities should be mandated rather than driven by individual champions. However it is also important to recognise that strong leaders make effective champions and can provide valuable support to integration efforts, particularly in the short and medium term. Leadership of efforts to integrate WASH and nutrition should come from within existing institutions, rather than by creating a new agency. Currently, roles and responsibilities are not clearly allocated across sectors or agencies, so it is unclear who is responsible for leading on specific aspects of WASH, nutrition, or WASH-nutrition integration. While individual leaders can work across siloed institutions, this is challenging and therefore it is necessary to focus on institutional arrangements that can connect silos. High-level leadership is necessary to foster buy-in to integration efforts. However, while high-level leaders can drive change it is not feasible for them to personally manage integration efforts. Government leadership at the national level is likely to be more effective than Sub-national leadership.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Leadership

Barriers to integration

- Unclear leadership roles and responsibilities relating to WASH-nutrition integration
- Lack of institutional support for leaders to innovate in order to integrate WASH and nutrition
- Over-estimation among national level stakeholders of capacity for or interest in leadership at Sub-national level

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

High priority:

- National level stakeholders provide clear leadership and guidance to Sub-national line agencies.

Additional recommendations:

- Strengthen existing coordination mechanisms by ensuring leadership roles and responsibilities are allocated clearly, and sufficient support is provided for follow-through.
- High-level leaders promote buy-in to an existing coordination mechanism, likely CARD.
- Use evidence to advocate for WASH-nutrition integration to leadership, to encourage senior government leaders to support collaboration across sectors for WASH and nutrition integration.
- If increased Sub-national leadership is desired, national level to provide funding allocation to increase provincial and/or district government capacity to spend time on coordination for WASH-nutrition integration.

FINDINGS



Governance: Vertical government implementation structures for WASH, and separate structures for nutrition, are very well established. Consequently, there is no government implementation structure that is responsible for both WASH and nutrition. Line ministries allocate funding vertically, and Sub-national governments have limited decision-making authority. Therefore, while some national stakeholders expect Sub-national governments to coordinate integration, Sub-national stakeholders reported that this is usually not feasible. An alternative approach is to use a coordination mechanism at national level, such as CARD: a national-level coordination mechanism could provide a forum to negotiate an overarching strategy for integration, and subsequently to agree on which ministries will take on which responsibilities under the guidance of the agreed strategy. Stakeholders also commented on governance of civil society, noting that development partners that fund or implement cross-sectoral programs are required to report to multiple ministries or line agencies, and therefore cross-sectoral programs require more administrative work compared with single-sector programs.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia / Tom GreenWood



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Kim Hak

RECOMMENDATIONS



Governance

Barriers to integration

- Lack of communication between ministries or line agencies
- Expectation that Sub-national governments will develop innovative approaches to integration, although Sub-national governments have limited capacity to innovate in the context of existing vertical structures
- Co-existence of multiple potential coordination mechanisms for WASH-nutrition integration

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

High priority:

- Strengthen a single national coordination mechanism, likely CARD, and use this mechanism as a structure for integration.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen existing mechanisms that support development partner alignment, and consider how to streamline reporting for government and development partners.

Additional recommendations:

- Work within existing vertical structures to promote openness to other ministries, and subsequently build buy-in to structures for integration.
- Consider appointing a single focal point in each ministry or line agency to participate in discussions about integrated work.
- Consider the feasibility of Sub-national governance of cross-sectoral projects, including an assessment of resources required.
- Identify lessons learned from previous examples of responsive cross-sectoral coordination, e.g. maternal death audits.

FINDINGS



Financing: Funding for nutrition and WASH is limited. In this context there is already competition for funding, and stakeholders are concerned that integration will increase competition for funds by encouraging nutrition – focused actors to seek funds previously reserved for WASH, or vice versa. This level of concern leads to territorialism about sectoral mandates and discourages participation in cross-sectoral work. Stakeholders also commented that public and donor funding is usually siloed, whereas merged funding enables integrated work. There are costs to pursuing integration and these are often unfunded since funding is siloed and also tied to specific projects. At the same time, integration can lead to more efficient programs.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia / Kim Hak

RECOMMENDATIONS



Financing

Barriers to integration

- ☛ Insufficient funding for core activities in WASH or nutrition
- ☛ Integration activities are unfunded
- ☛ Competition for funding, and perceived risk of future competition

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

Top priority:

- ☛ Advocate to Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) for increased budget allocations to both nutrition and WASH.
- ☛ Advocate to donors for increased merged funding opportunities, e.g. through existing government coordination mechanisms and global civil society networks.

Additional recommendation:

- ☛ Include integration expenses in costings, and use costings to mobilise funds from government and civil society.

FINDINGS



Personnel: Human resource capacity was identified as a major constraint to WASH and nutrition integration. Many people have limited knowledge or interest in activities outside their sector. Yet it is very difficult for people to have deep technical capacity across a broad range of content areas. Instead, there should be widespread, accurate understanding of how WASH and nutrition relate at the big picture level. At the level of technical detail, if it is not possible to find people who have deep technical capacity in both WASH and nutrition, it can be effective to bring together multi – sectoral teams of people who each have deep technical expertise in one area. High – level champions for WASH – nutrition integration are valuable and effective. However, it may be more sustainable to have focal points, which are institutionalised roles, rather than champions who are more personality – driven. Stakeholders reported strong emotional responses to integration – including both fear of change and openness to change – which can be expected to influence the success of integration efforts.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/ Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Personnel

Barriers to integration

- Many people have limited technical capacity beyond their sector of primary responsibility
- It is overwhelming for an individual to have deep technical knowledge across a broad range of content areas
- Negative emotional reactions to integration are a strong disincentive to integrate that is difficult to manage
- People tend to focus on their existing responsibilities and established routines
- Limited time availability of potential champions for WASH-nutrition integration

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

Top priority:

- Cultivate and support working relationships across sectors, whether within or between organisations, e.g. through the consistent allocation of the same individuals to attend meetings, funded time, funded transport.

High priority:

- Consider how to promote integration in ways that reassure people of their responsibilities and mitigate territorialism, e.g. clear allocation of responsibilities and early communication about this allocation.

Additional recommendations:

- Use champions strategically to advocate cross-sectoral work, but not to manage the process of integration.
- If focal points are appointed, recruit people who are experts in their content area and open to other content areas.
- Consider providing rigorous, funded training opportunities for a small number of staff rather than less detailed training for a large group.

FINDINGS



Design: For programs implemented by civil society, program design is driven by the priorities of the donor. Many Sub-national government programs are focused on delivery of outputs that have been mandated at the national level, and programs implemented by development partners can also be designed to achieve pre – determined outputs. This means that designs can be developed around pre – determined outputs, rather than on selecting outputs that best support the achievement of stipulated outcomes. A greater emphasis on outcomes would provide more flexibility in design and is better suited to a cross – sectoral approach. There is a time lag to program design, and limited windows of opportunity to bring in new ideas. There is limited flexibility once designs are established, particularly for Sub-national governments, line agencies and implementing NGOs. Stakeholders reported several suggestions for integrated design, including co – location, behaviour change campaigns that include both WASH and nutrition messages, changes to supply – side WASH programs, and delivery through the private sector. An integrated theory of change or causal framework would support design of integrated or complementary programs.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Ung Kim Oan



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/ Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Design

Barriers to integration

- 🔹 Lack of awareness of current good practice in other sectors
- 🔹 Limited funding opportunities for co-location
- 🔹 Donor-driven design
- 🔹 Time-lag in design, and limited windows of opportunity

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

High priority:

- 🔹 Use current evidence, including locally generated evidence, during limited windows of opportunity to ensure programs are as up-to-date as possible.

Additional recommendations:

- 🔹 Advocate to donors to fund programs that are informed by the integrated theory of change or causal framework, including co-located programs.
- 🔹 Sub-national governments to advocate for co-located funds, e.g. through province- level or district-level planning.

FINDINGS



Implementation: There is a risk that efforts to promote WASH – nutrition integration can remain at the level of theoretical discussion, without moving to implementation; stakeholders identified a need to focus more on implementation. Cross – sectoral steering architecture is essential to support routine implementation of integrated work. While stakeholders reported some examples of integration being achieved through coordinating the implementation of discrete sector – specific programs, these were exceptions and this approach is unlikely to become common since there is very limited flexibility in implementation. Stakeholders described several successful implementation strategies for integrated programs, including a single contract, shared delivery platform, and an integrated design that is implemented in a segmented way. Stakeholders at national and Sub-national level explained that it can be very challenging for community members to participate in multiple activities, or learn information about multiple topics at once – this is an important implementation consideration for integrated programming that aims to address both WASH and nutrition.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia / Kim Hak



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Kim Hak

RECOMMENDATIONS



Implementation

Barriers to integration

- 🔹 Ongoing theoretical discussions about WASH-nutrition integration do not necessarily lead to action, potentially resulting in participant disengagement
- 🔹 It is difficult to establish and maintain steering architecture across sectors
- 🔹 Expectation that integration can be achieved through coordination of discrete projects during implementation, despite the fact that this is very challenging in practice

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

High priority:

- 🔹 Promote cross-sectoral steering architecture that is institutionalised rather than project-driven, e.g. strengthened CARD, high-level champions for integration, and increased support for provincial- and district-level planning.

Additional recommendations:

- 🔹 Ensure that theoretical discussions, e.g. working groups and meetings, have an action plan and are managed through agendas, minutes, action items, etc.
- 🔹 Promote an enabling environment for integration at the design stage, e.g. through policy, governance and financing.

FINDINGS



Monitoring, evaluation and reporting: Stakeholders are accountable to what they report on. This can discourage integration where reporting lines are siloed. Attribution of nutrition outcomes to sector – specific activities is extremely challenging. Joint monitoring is efficient, but requires consensus on relevant indicators. The current institutional context promotes parallel monitoring, rather than joint monitoring. Monitoring and evaluation provides an important opportunity to generate local evidence, however generating evidence regarding the specific changes attributable to WASH or nutrition is too burdensome for regular monitoring and instead requires special studies.



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Kim Hak



© Photo credit by WaterAid Cambodia/Tom GreenWood

RECOMMENDATIONS



Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Barriers to integration

- Lack of consensus across sectors around an integrated theory of change or causal framework
- Focus by funding bodies on sector-specific outputs, rather than broader outcomes
- Accountability and incentives for outputs are sector-specific
- Increased time burden to liaise with multiple sectors

Opportunities to address or overcome these barriers

High priority:

- Develop an integrated theory of change or causal framework that includes the contribution of WASH to nutrition. This theory of change or causal framework can be developed based on existing materials.
- Build consensus around this integrated theory of change or causal framework.

Additional recommendations:

- National ministries to provide technical guidance on indicators for joint monitoring, as well as clear allocation of responsibilities for indicators
- Explore possibilities for consolidated monitoring and reporting within defined areas, e.g. reporting against a cross- sectoral district plan.



🏠 #93, S.I Building, 3rd Floor, Phreah Sihanouk Blvd,
Sangkat Chaktomuk, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

🌐 Website : www.wateraid.org

✉ Email : cambodia@wateraid.org.au