



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

Country profile: Zimbabwe



Key statisticsⁱ

- 27.6% of children under five are stunted
- 3.3% of children under five are wasted
- 67% of the population have access to at least basic drinking water services
- 39% of the population have access to at least basic sanitation services
- 31% of the population have access to basic hygiene

Background

Zimbabwe is not on course to meet the World Health Assembly's targets on under-five stunting and anaemia, but has made some progress on stunting. It is on course to meet the target for under-five wasting. Zimbabwe has been a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement since 2011 and is also a member of Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership, pledging six commitments at the 2014 High Level Meeting. Its nutrition strategy is up-to-date, but the WASH strategy expired in 2016. Food and nutrition security issues have also been addressed in the Zimbabwe Food and Nutrition Security Policy, which has taken a multi-sectoral approach and to which all government ministries have pledged their support.

Is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) integrated within national nutrition plans?

Zimbabwe National Nutrition Strategy (2014–2018)

The strategy offers a very comprehensive overview of nutrition, and acknowledges that inadequate knowledge and practices related to WASH are a main causal factor of poor nutritional status in Zimbabwe. The strategy also identifies a need to break down the nutritional status for each targeted age bracket. Strategic activities are separated into short, medium and long term, with short-term activities aimed to address stunting in children under two through maternal, adolescent and infant and young child feeding, as well as behaviour change communication on hygiene and nutrition. However, there is also an opportunity to integrate WASH interventions within maternal deworming activities. Medium and longer term activities focus on multi-sectoral approaches.

Institutional mechanisms in Zimbabwe include a National Working Group on Nutrition, which leads the objective assessment of progress. The Ministry of Health also plans to appoint a scientific interdepartmental committee to monitor the strategy, which will include members from six key sector ministries, including the Ministry of Water.

Is nutrition integrated within national WASH plans?

Strategy To Accelerate Access To Sanitation And Hygiene (2011–2015)

This strategy provides a brief overview of its approach to improving sanitation and hygiene. It does not recognise the links between WASH and nutrition. The interventions mentioned include behaviour change, community health and hygiene promotion, and services responding to communities and consumer demand. There is opportunity to integrate nutrition in all aspects, which have not been addressed. The strategy will be led by a National Action Committee and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare.

Recommendations for the Government of Zimbabwe

- Zimbabwe's nutrition strategy should include more WASH interventions within existing nutritional activities. This could include BabyWASH interventions relating to early childhood development, such as the provision of safe and sanitary baby/child-friendly spaces for play. WASH promotional activities could also be integrated into maternal deworming programmes.
- The strategy for sanitation and hygiene should integrate nutrition objectives and ensure WASH interventions are nutrition-sensitive. In addition, these interventions could also target those with nutritional vulnerabilities, as the strategy stresses the importance of targeting the poorest and most vulnerable groups.
- With the Ministry of Health and Child Care playing a key role in both plans, there is a need to ensure that political leaders and senior officials advocate for WASH–nutrition integration, and may also be able to act as exemplars to others in the region.
- The Government should ensure nutrition and WASH stakeholders are involved in all relevant working groups in order to facilitate coordination for the implementation of the nutrition and WASH strategies.
- Prioritise reaching rural communities with integrated WASH–nutrition interventions to address the higher prevalence of malnutrition and WASH-related diseases in those areas.

Recommendations for all national governments

- Ensure policies align with the Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnected targets 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 sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate 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 nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improvement of provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-location of 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.

This country profile is drawn from the global report 'The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition' produced by ACF, the SHARE Consortium and WaterAid. Read the full report at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess

ⁱ To ensure consistency and cross-country comparability, we have used the most recent figures published by global monitoring reports. In some countries, more up-to-date national statistics are available. Nutrition statistics from UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) *Child malnutrition estimates*. Available at www.who.int/entity/nutgrowthdb/jme_dataset2017_final.xlsx?ua=1 WASH statistics from UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2017) *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baseline*. Available at washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version1