

IRC

JUNE 2021

Monitoring report 2020

As submitted by IRC to the Directorate-General for International Cooperation of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Supporting water sanitation
and hygiene services for life

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Its content is derived from monitoring and learning reports submitted by IRC teams in the Netherlands, United States, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Uganda and our New Focus Countries.

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Cover photo: W. Kamala, Self Help Group Federation Leader, Arjyapalli Gram Panchayat, Ganjam district, Odisha, calling for the need for women's capacity building for meaningful participation in grassroots decision making in the 'She makes change' campaign.

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Abbreviations

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DGIS	Directorate-General for International Cooperation
DPF	Data Processing Framework
ECG	Espace Culturel Gambidi
HEWASA	Health through Water and Sanitation
HPMA	Hand Pump Mechanics Association
HR	Human Resources
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JMP	Joint WHO/UNICEF Monitoring Programme
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
O&M	Operations and Management
ODF	Open Defecation Free
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
PTPS	Para Todos, Por Siempre (Everyone, Forever)
QIS	Qualitative Information System
RWSN	Rural Water Supply Network
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWA	Sanitation and Water for All
ToC	Theory of Change
UWASNET	Uganda Water and Sanitation Network
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSCC	Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (now the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund)
WSUP	Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor
WWW	World Water Week

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Executive summary

In 2020, IRC saw exciting and affirming achievements from the fourth year of our 2017-2030 Strategic Framework and Theory of Change. This was despite the year being uniquely turbulent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our monitoring ability was greatly enhanced by the launch of our innovative public facing dashboard. It marks a major milestone in four years' work of thinking through how to monitor systems strengthening. It allows an 'at-a-glance' appreciation of progress across our entire Theory of Change in our Country and Global Programmes, and shows both the strength of the whole WASH system and the services it delivers in our partner districts.

It allowed us to see strong progress over the first four years of our new strategy – most importantly in the form of at least 137,000 people with enhanced access to water services in IRC's six long-term partner districts, and over 108,000 with better sanitation. Over 171 schools and 55 health facilities have upgraded water, sanitation and hygiene services. These numbers only count people in the districts for whom we have conducted a baseline and follow-up service level assessment with local government. The combined population of all IRC's partner districts touches 2.78 million people. Equally, it allowed us to see the growing strength of the partnerships we support within each district.

Systems strengthening is slow, complex, and often unglamorous work. As such, these 137,000 people represent the tip of the iceberg, whose beginnings are found in Master Planning and partnership development work started (and reported) two or three years ago. We expect the numbers served to grow in the years to come, as our district partnerships strengthen and deepen and become ever more effective. And, as the external representation of our monitoring system, our dashboard allows us to see this. We can track progress over the years, and support change and adaptation on the basis of experience.

At the national level, we also see promising signs of sector maturity and consolidation. In Uganda, Ghana and Burkina Faso we see the growing importance of public utilities in the provision of safe water. This marks an important step up from community management, which struggles to provide any but the most basic levels of service. In India, through the Jal Jeevan Mission, we see what is possible when a national government truly gets behind WASH. Having massively increased access to sanitation with the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Jal Jeevan mission now seeks to do the same for water supply: bringing a tap to every household in India by 2024.

Two important initiatives that support the work of scaling our district level learning moved forward significantly during the year. These are our District Master Planning Facility and our WASH Systems Academy. The first saw an important consolidation of the lessons learned and the development of a solid concept that we are starting to share with potential donors and supporters. As we do so, we are simultaneously expanding our District Master Planning work in our focus countries, and are currently engaged in Master Plan development in 19 Districts.

Another important mechanism for scale is our strategic partnership with the US-based NGO Water For People. Together, we work in more than 15 countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia, including a shared presence in Honduras, India and Uganda. During the year, we succeeded in developing an exciting and challenging new Strategic Framework ('Destination 2030' or D30 for short) based on our shared vision and long collaboration. D30 will serve as the basis for a strategic partnership based on ever closer alignment of our work, globally and in-country.

COVID-19 offered challenges and opportunities. Challenges in that all our staff faced major – albeit varying – difficulties in carrying out their work. Opportunities in that water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) was in the spotlight as never before – seen as a critical public health intervention in the face of the pandemic. At the level of programmes, our strong district and national partnerships, and supportive donors allowed us to rapidly pivot programming and support districts. It also helped us forge new and important relationships with colleagues in the health sector.

Our Watershed strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs ended in 2021 with an exponentially growing set of achievements capped by a global campaign that was seen by millions.

Conversely, our unexpected failure to persuade our partners in the Ministry of the importance and value of continuing this programme was the year's greatest setback. Watershed was a great success yet, in important ways, it was also just getting started – starting to build significant momentum and attracting an ever growing



Djelika Guire, Madina Rouamba, and campaign ambassador Salif Sanfo, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

collective of engaged civic society partners. The objectives set by the Ministry in its internal strategy and by Watershed itself, could never have been achieved within five years. The Watershed team had signalled this from the start and had made it clear that at least 10 years would be required.

This disappointment for IRC represents a far deeper challenge for WASH Systems Strengthening. Despite a welcome growth in the use of language and concepts of systems strengthening, including in the policy discourse of bilateral donors, the disjunct between this language and the actual activities and means committed to systems strengthening continues to be a chasm. It is, arguably, one of the greatest impediments to true systems strengthening. It is certainly the greatest challenge that IRC faces in any year – including 2020.

This is not an argument for unaccountable and limitless funding for NGOs (or anyone). It is simply an acknowledgement that finding sources of stable funding with which to pursue our mission remains our single greatest challenge. It is also a reflection that what IRC experiences as an organisational challenge, is experienced by the sector as an existential one – and one that helps to explain decades of failure.

1. IRC at a glance

WHO'S INVOLVED AND WHAT DID WE INVEST?	WHAT DID WE DO AND WHAT DID WE PRODUCE?	HOW MANY PEOPLE DID WE REACH?
<p>8 focus country programmes 1 global programme</p> <p>15 partner districts, and 16 Para Todos Por Siempre (PTPS) partner municipalities</p> <p>10 offices around the world</p> <p>110 active programmes and projects</p> <p>132 staff in our flexible workforce: 34 in the Netherlands 59 in focus countries 1 in the United States 8 hosted 27 associates and 3 interns</p> <p>980 IRC Consult advisory days over 52 assignments in at least 16 countries</p> <p>10,445 days of staff expertise</p> <p>€10.7M invested from 37 donors and 65 clients</p>	<p>19 district WASH master plans supported</p> <p>141 capacity-building events worldwide co-organised</p> <p>82 working groups and learning platforms supported in our focus countries</p> <p>2 new WASH Systems Academy courses launched</p> <p>216 advocacy activities supporting initiatives of civil society organisations</p> <p>115 resources of which 85 research outputs, 7 journal articles published on our website</p> <p>289 articles of which 172 news items and 70 blogs published on our website</p> <p>19 newsletters and 31 videos</p>	<p>2.78M people in our partner districts</p> <p>137K people who stepped up the water ladder; 108K people who received a higher level of sanitation service</p> <p>916 people including 136 civil-society and community-based organisations attending knowledge sharing and capacity-building events</p> <p>2.4K participants in WASH Systems Academy courses</p> <p>14.6K unique downloads from our website</p> <p>8K returning visitors to our website</p> <p>14K social media engagements and 491K social media video views</p> <p>362 Google Scholar citations</p> <p>14 references to our work by global media</p> <p>66 policies adopted for sustainable and inclusive development</p>

8 focus countries

The largest part of our work happens in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Mali, Niger and Uganda.

22 additional countries

Through numerous consultancy assignments and partnerships, we also worked in Bangladesh, Benin, Central African Republic, Colombia, Eswatini, Georgia, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Palestine, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo, the United States, Zambia and at regional level in Latin America.

10 offices around the world

We have offices in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Mali, Niger and Uganda, and additional offices in the Netherlands (HQ) and the United States.

2. An introduction to our results framework and monitoring methodology

IRC is dedicated to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all - and in particular targets 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 (safe water, sanitation and wastewater). The SDGs aim to ensure that no one is left behind whilst also lifting the level of services offered.

The IRC strategy is guided by a long-term Theory of Change and backed by a praxis¹ developed over 50 years of experience. The strategy is based on the understanding that only strong **local and national** WASH systems² can provide water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services universally and sustainably. IRC's work is focused on developing and strengthening those systems, which in turn improve service quality and sustainability. Figure 1 shows IRC's Theory of Change at its highest level.

IRC works as a **change hub** and capacity builder at the local level as well as at national and international levels. A hub helps public officials and local leaders to lead and coordinate the many actors involved. It facilitates relationships, and provides expertise to improve planning, monitoring, and other building blocks of strong public service systems. A hub also helps to extract, consolidate and share lessons learned, locally, nationally and internationally. Above all, it helps to guide multiple actors to work effectively together to deliver strong systems and reliable services: something that we call 'collective action'.

IRC tests ideas whilst delivering real impact in the form of improved services to people living in our partner districts. Promising solutions are shared and scaled up through structured learning, knowledge management and influencing. Ultimately, all of our vertically-integrated work, from local to global levels, contributes to a more effective service delivery system, improving the health, education and livelihoods of the people in IRC focus contexts and around the world.

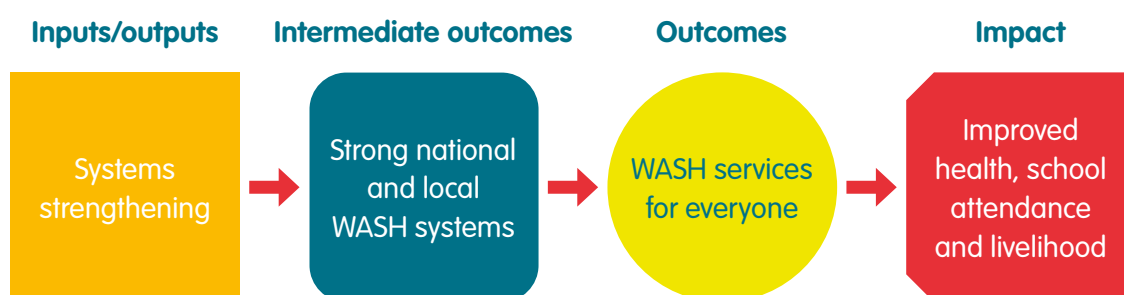


Figure 1: High level Theory of Change for IRC. The detailed Theory of Change is in [Annex 1](#). See also [Figure 3](#).

1. The word praxis means 'theory informed by practice, and practice based on theory' – we find it a useful word to describe our underlying philosophy as a think-and-do-tank.
2. By system we mean much more than just pumps, pipes and concrete. We mean all the people (actors) and things (factors) that need to work together to provide a service over time. A systems based approach is about building and strengthening those systems to the point where they can manage on their own: the true definition of sustainability.

Our strategy is underpinned by our understanding that a presence is needed at both national and decentralised levels to achieve impact and scale. This is important in ensuring that high-level intervention and evidence-based influencing in policy leads to real changes at local levels where service delivery happens. Our district level work ensures that the real experiences of people and their communities, service providers and local authorities are included in the design of solutions and long-term plans.

Our results framework mirrors this logic, measuring the outcomes of WASH systems strengthening and the services delivered, as well as our contribution to this change. Internal monitoring in IRC is embedded in our approach to strategy, to adaptation and to both inward and outward accountability.

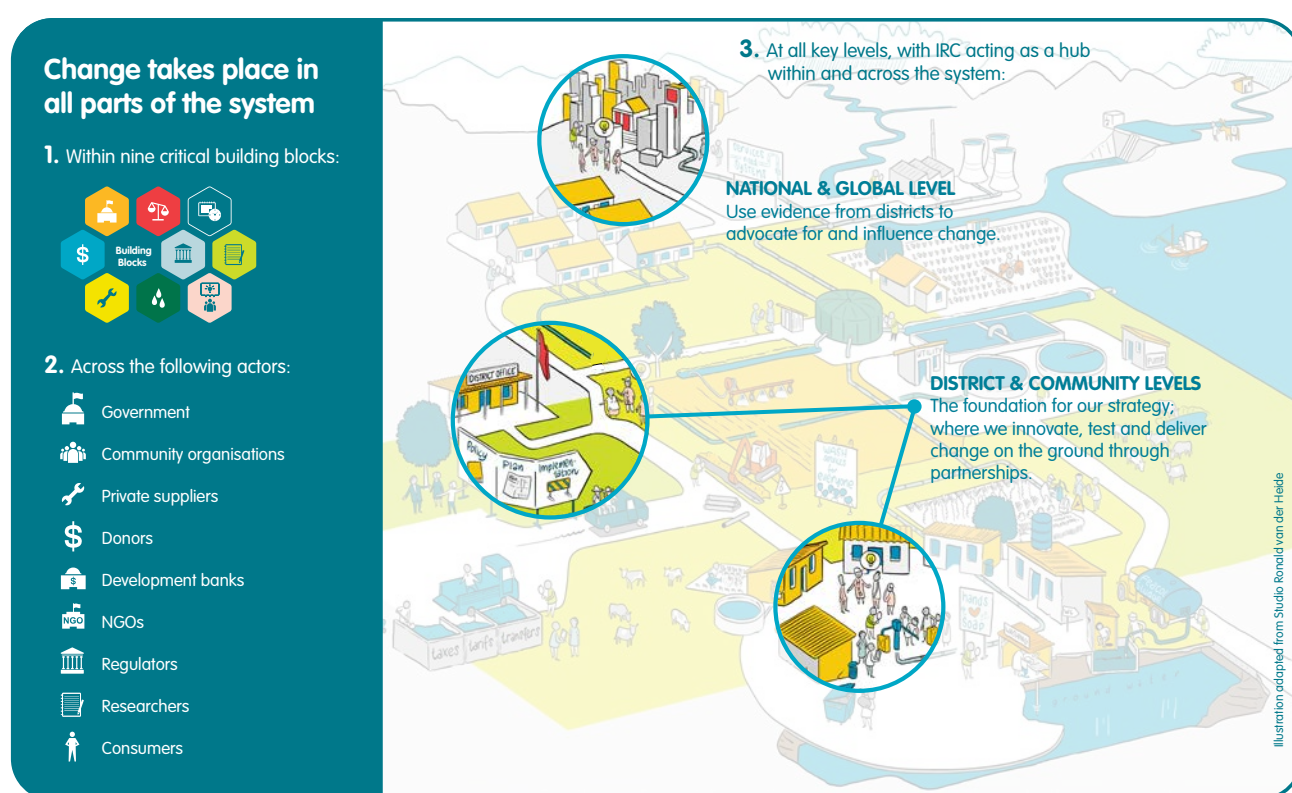


Figure 2. This graphic of real WASH systems in action shows people working together to meet their needs of today while planning for progressive improvements over time. These levels are illustrative, and work in between these levels is also essential.

One priority for 2020 was to visualise and publicly share our monitoring results and make them easier to use and analyse for IRC staff and partners. Key data for each step in our Theory of Change in each country and partner district are now available in [a public dashboard](#) on our website. This report provides key data from 2020 and presents a narrative description of key results and challenges from each programme and IRC as an organisation.

The year 2020 was a challenging one, but through it we have found our Theory of Change ever relevant. Strong national systems, political and financial commitments, and partnerships have proven essential for responding and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic. From February, the pandemic disrupted many of our activities in our

focus countries and internationally, forcing delays, adaptation to virtual formats, and shifts in priorities to ensure WASH interventions were at the centre of the pandemic response. A halt in international travel also tested—and proved—the strength of our internal systems for communications, monitoring, information sharing, and relationship management.

It also marked the fourth year of **IRC's Strategic Framework 2017-2030, and the penultimate year in our 2017-2021 planning framework**. Since 2017, through collective action with our partners, we have worked with a growing group of partner districts (we currently work in 15 districts in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mali, Niger, Uganda and 16 municipalities in Honduras)) and their local governments to help them deliver their vision of providing universal water and sanitation. The total population of IRC partner districts currently stands at 2.78 million. Our commitment is to work with these districts until all their residents have access to at least basic water and sanitation services, and with clear progress toward delivering the highest (and safest) levels of service.

With growing proof of concept of what can be achieved through collective action in districts, we are increasingly looking to scale up. We constantly emphasise the importance of engaging with and influencing higher levels of government to achieve sustainability and scale. We have prioritised national and global level evidence-based influencing and capacity building, with the primary objectives of: raising the political attention given to WASH; bringing more money into the sector; and, making sure that that money is spent efficiently and effectively. To this end, we are working to ensure that solutions tested at the local level inform and drive WASH systems change nationally.

Following a mid-term review of IRC's strategy in 2019, in 2020 we revisited the vision and strategy for impact in IRC focus countries and globally. In doing so, we have raised our ambition and formed a new strategic partnership with the US-based NGO Water For People. In this partnership, we are jointly committed to increasing our impact to ensure that services are delivered to 20 million people locally. In doing so, we will create vision, momentum and capacity in our focus countries towards reaching all those currently unserved (approximately 200 million people) through national WASH systems strengthening, and contribute our voice and influence to the global goal of ensuring that everyone, everywhere is reached by 2030 (some 2 billion people globally). We jointly developed a new strategy called Destination 2030 (D30), that builds on the many successes of both organisations to focus even more on achieving impact at scale beyond our partner districts. While D30 will only be formally launched in the second half of 2021, some of the insights and learning from the new strategy are reflected in this 2020 monitoring report.

This report presents an overview of IRC's global family of programmes in 2020. Section 2 provides an introduction to our results framework and monitoring approach. Section 3 provides a summary of our methodology and tools for monitoring under our 2017-2030 Strategic Framework. Section 4 gives an overview of progress against our main outcomes during 2020. Section 5 focuses specifically on the contribution of DGIS funding of IRC programmes. Section 6 gives an overview of the inputs and the organisation's resources and staff that make programme delivery possible. IRC's annual analytical progress review is also available in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), where the financial flows of the DGIS programme funds are reported.

3. Our approach to monitoring

IRC's complete Theory of Change 2017-2030 (Annex 1) describes our vision and guides our actions for achieving the SDG 6 targets. It maps out the intermediate outcomes that we think are most critical for the sector to deliver WASH services, and our proposed contribution to those outcomes. A simplified version is shown in Figure 3.

Theory of change: an overview

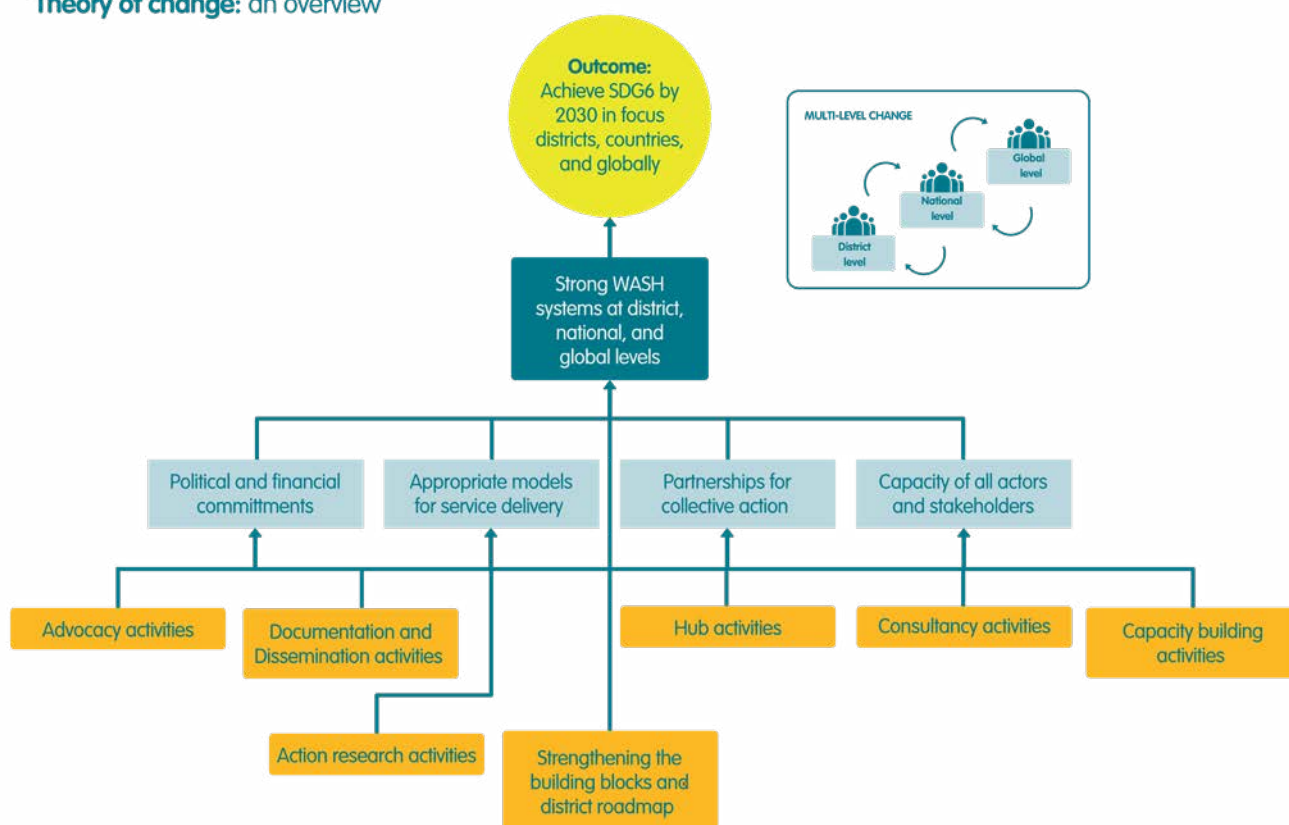


Figure 3: The core elements of the IRC Theory of Change. Activities (yellow boxes) lead to intermediate outcomes (blue) to the outcomes of WASH services for all, in partner districts, focus countries, and globally

Given the understanding that sector strengthening requires collective action by multiple WASH actors, as well as IRC's role as a hub to support the partnerships that will deliver this collective action, much of our impact will be in the form of contributing to shared outcomes. In monitoring terms, and for much of our work, **contribution is more important to us than attribution.**

Nevertheless, we are committed to transparently holding ourselves accountable for what we do; we believe in striving towards effectiveness and value for money. To this end, we measure the outcomes we want to achieve, our contributions to them, and our delivery of key activities and outputs in our annual plans. In so doing, we acknowledge that true success lies in the actions of others – without whose work the outcomes cannot and will

not be achieved. We also acknowledge that it is only over time that we can see whether we are achieving our outcomes – it is often only several years later that the definitive outcome of activities or a set thereof becomes clear: much systems strengthening involves ‘driving using the rear view mirror’. As such, having a clear Theory of Change is essential: the logic of which must be constantly questioned and updated.

3.1 Activity and output monitoring

IRC runs a decentralised family of six Country Programmes and one Global Programme. Country Programmes are delivered by our Country Teams, supported by our Global Hub and Communicated by our Influencing Teams, who also deliver our Global Programme. Programmes report against their 2020 annual plans, on both planned activities and outputs, and unplanned outputs and activities. As IRC embraces complexity and adaptation, changes to the plan are welcome but are carefully documented for the purpose of learning and accountability. In addition, we have a ‘New Focus Countries’ programme that oversees early-stage work in countries to which we are considering expanding.

In 2020, unplanned outputs and activities were significantly influenced by COVID-19. Our monitoring was therefore revised to capture adaptations to COVID-19. This included the identification of three priority areas for the COVID-19 response:

1. Ensuring WASH action is integrated in emergency response.
2. Ensuring that the recovery-phase includes a longer-term WASH systems agenda, with increased attention on WASH in schools, health care facilities and hygiene.
3. Leveraging COVID to improve the position of WASH in national and global development agendas’ financing.

In addition to activity reports, country programmes report on a set of numeric output indicators. These include: published outputs, people trained, and platforms and networks facilitated. The Global Hub also keeps track of the total number of social media engagements. These numeric results are summarised in the ‘IRC at a glance’ table (chapter 1).

Annex 3 provides details on progress with key activities and outputs of IRC programmes in 2020.

3.2 Outcome monitoring

Both Country and Global Programmes measure progress against the main intermediate outcomes in the Theory of Change (the four blue boxes in Figure 3).

In Country Programmes, these are summarised as:

- strong political and financial commitment³;
- strong partnerships for change;
- strong service delivery models;
- strong capacity of key actors.

Together, these contribute to:

- strong WASH systems (the blue box in Figure 1), measured using nine building blocks at district and national level

That deliver

- WASH services, measured using service levels within partner districts at national level.

Progress in IRC's Global programme is measured against three main outcomes summarised as:

- strong political and financial commitment (global actors);
- the presence of a range of fit-for-purpose service delivery models;
- strong capacity of the key actors.

Monitoring is undertaken using the four main methods described below.

Method 1: Qualitative Information System

The first four intermediate outcomes are measured using Qualitative Information System (QIS) ladders and are scored separately at both district and national levels, and use modified indicators for the global level³. The QIS ladders use ordinal scoring scales to convert qualitative information (from participatory appraisals) into numbers, enabling both the capture of rich descriptive information as well as the generation of semi-quantitative scores to help track change over time. These are the 'how' of delivering strong WASH systems and change within the WASH system.

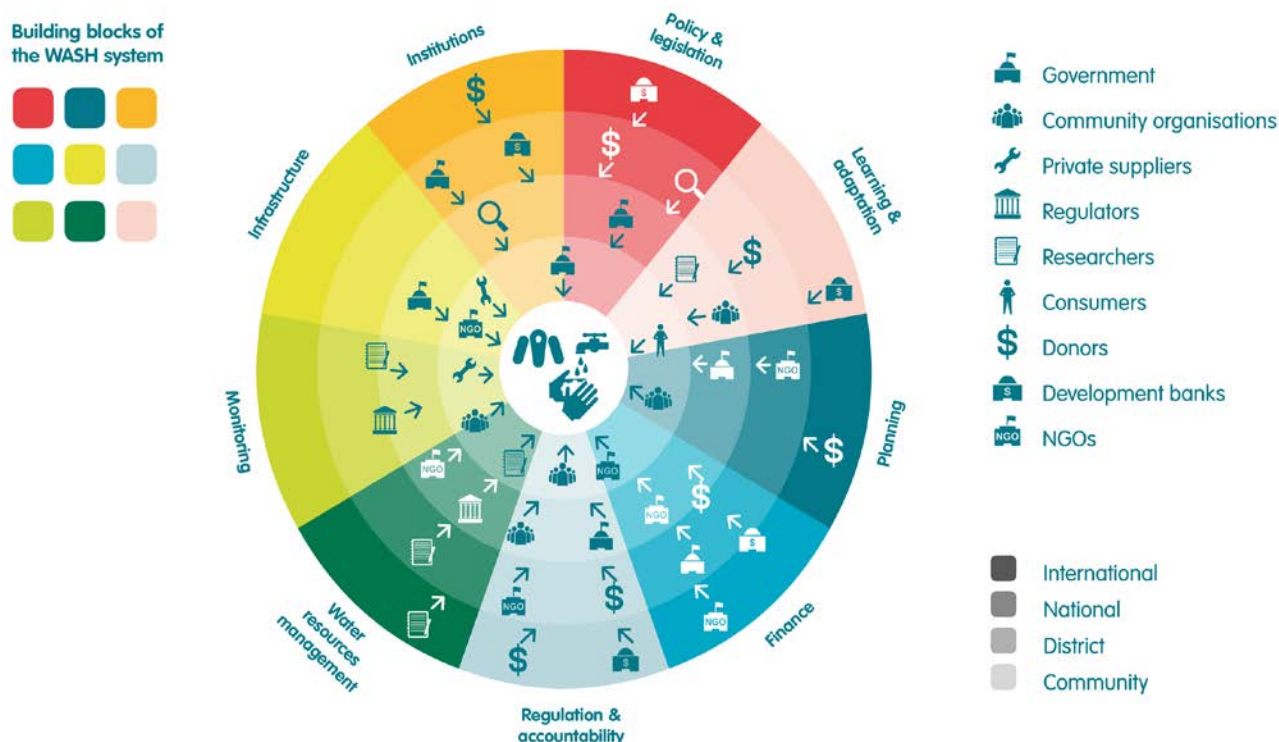
Method 2: Monitoring the strength of national and district WASH systems: scoring the WASH system building blocks⁴

The fifth outcome of the IRC Theory of Change is the overall strength of the WASH system. The building blocks are a way of breaking down the complexity of the WASH system, and looking at it through different lenses that allow it to be more easily understood and measured. Each of the nine WASH system building blocks is evaluated and

3. In addition to QIS, for the outcome 'political and financial commitment', quantitative indicators are used to track the availability of resources for WASH in focus districts.

4. The nine WASH building blocks as defined by IRC are: institutions and coordination; policy and legislation; regulation/accountability; finance; planning; monitoring; infrastructure; water resource management; and, learning and adaptation. For more information, see [Huston and Moriarty \(2018\)](#).

scored at the district and national level using a set of 3-5 Likert scale⁵ indicators (benchmarks representing the key aspects of that building block). An abbreviated set of indicators are used to specifically assess the systems for hygiene and extra-household settings.



Aligning stakeholders toward sustainable service in 6 Focus countries and 9 partner districts: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Uganda. And in 12 Other countries through IRC Consult and Global Hub based in the Netherlands

Figure 4: The building blocks of the WASH system involve a complex network of stakeholders at local, national, and international level.⁴

Method 3: WASH services monitoring

In partner districts and focus countries, IRC programmes strive to follow the SDG 6 indicators using the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) definitions and methodology and to align with national monitoring systems wherever possible. The JMP identifies a service ladder whose rungs consist of five distinct service levels: surface water; unimproved; limited; basic; and, safely managed. Like the JMP, we use a combination of household surveys, infrastructure, water quality, and administrative data to estimate the proportion of the population being served at each level. The criteria include technology type, protection from contaminants, distance from home, and availability.

5. A Likert scale is a common rating scale which offers balanced responses, in our case, ranging from 0 to 5. The benchmark statements for the building blocks' elements are scored from 0 (non-existent) to 5 (exists, and fully applied).

Each level up from 'surface water' or 'no access' **represents a significant improvement in the safety and security of the supply**. As several models and tools can contribute to service improvement, we monitor with the aim to understand the effectiveness of different strategies and to identify gaps where services are not improving. We are driving progress towards universal access to safe services, and eventually 'safely managed' services by using a variety of context-appropriate strategies.

The JMP definitions do not always perfectly match national norms and standards. Nevertheless, we believe that for consistency and ease of comparison across countries and programmes, it makes sense to use JMP wherever possible. At national level, we draw our data from the country-led monitoring system using both asset and household data which we collect from both JMP and national data sets (from ministries responsible for water and sanitation and/or national statistics agencies).

At district level, we work with government partners in the focus districts to adapt support and strengthen their own monitoring systems, and to bring these in line with JMP and national methodologies to enable the most resource-efficient and accurate methodology possible. Where these provide insufficient data we supplement government monitoring with our own survey data.

For more information on the JMP methodology, go to <https://washdata.org/monitoring/methods>.

Method 4: Outcome harvesting

Starting in 2019, further to monitoring against predefined indicators, our programmes are also using outcome harvesting, a tool that helps us identify the unexpected and emergent changes we contribute to. Outcome harvesting is part of the solution that helps to fill in data between the big-picture overview that other methods give (e.g. service levels, building blocks) by capturing narratives around systems change. Outcome harvesting categorises changes into outcomes, significance of the outcome, and the contribution of a certain partner. It is a methodology that needs rigour, continuous capacity building and when done with adequate resources, it supports collaborative strategic reflection. Building on the successful implementation of the method in the Watershed programme, in 2019-2020, outcome harvesting was successfully adopted as an organisation-wide monitoring method. It helped build capacities in IRC and with partners supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and led to the first sets of outcomes collectively harvested and stored in a dashboard in mWater. A summary of the scores and outcomes harvested are presented in Annex 2.

In the next section, the integrated findings from activity, output, and outcome monitoring are presented in narrative form to highlight programme progress and challenges in 2020. Tabulated data are available in the Annexes, and you can interact with the data directly using our online dashboard at www.ircwash.org/data-behind-our-work.

4. Progress against outcomes in 2020

This section first gives an overview on progress toward WASH systems strengthening in IRC's focus countries and globally. This is followed by a section for each Country Programme and the Global programme, with each showing progress toward key outcomes in the Theory of Change. These sections also include an indication of IRC's contribution to these outcomes and mention key related activities and outputs.

4.1 Progress on WASH systems strengthening

As the fourth year in IRC's 2017-2030 Strategic Framework, in 2020 we saw hard-earned efforts coming to fruition. In districts, the greater capacity of local authorities and their commitment and leadership to universal WASH is clear. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and learning alliances in our focus countries are maturing— offering more than just coordination, but truly serving as loci for innovation, thought-leadership, and collective action. With four years of monitoring data against our strategy now visible in IRC's online dashboard, we can see that more than 137,000 people out of the 1.62 million who live in long-term partner districts have received higher levels of WASH services, and that the building blocks of local WASH systems are being put in place.

IRC's flagship tool for visionary and technical planning— district master plans— have gained national attention in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Uganda, and Ethiopia. In Mali and Niger, district master plans for achieving universal WASH in schools and health care facilities have introduced a new way of thinking about locally driven change. With strong district leadership in place, the emphasis has shifted to raising finance for these plans, marketing them, addressing finance gaps and tracking progress of their implementation. To do this, our role as a hub, connecting district, sub-national, national and global actors has been critical.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw the impact of fostering strong local partnerships in cross-cutting rapid responses through collective action. The importance of high-level executive commitment was observed around the world, echoing our calls and mission to raise the political profile of WASH as an essential component of public health and development. Our COVID-19 response focused on three areas: ensuring WASH integration in emergency response; advocating for WASH interventions as part of the medium-term recovery efforts (especially in health care facilities and schools); and, leveraging the pandemic to raise the profile of WASH.

Global influencing in a changing world

As international travel came to a halt in February 2020, our internal team unity— which we call OneIRC— was largely uninterrupted. Our Global Programme continued to deliver its influencing and think tank mission, while also supporting Country Programmes in maintaining the flow of information to international partners and donors and vice versa.

The Communications and Influencing Department, created in late 2019, established itself as an essential contributor to IRC's Global Programme. The team focused on both global influencing— raising the profile of

WASH— and on learning from country advocacy expertise with whom it could jointly design national influencing programmes to accelerate progress.

The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) collaboration, and our growing coalition of members in the Agenda for Change, are two key platforms and amplifiers of our collective action globally. SWA's new ten year strategy launched in 2020 reflects its success in garnering high-level commitment to WASH from heads of state and decision makers. To date, more than 70 governments have now joined as members. The SWA Handbook for Finance Ministers, published in 2020, reflects IRC's research and advice on finance, and marks a step toward arming decision-makers to more effectively invest in WASH within the wider public agenda.

Global capacity and commitment to WASH systems strengthening

Systems thinking, and the understanding of WASH service delivery as the outcome of strong local and national systems has become mainstream among a growing number of global actors. This is exciting progress for IRC as we have explicitly championed the approach since 2016 (and implicitly for more than a decade). Changing to this perspective is an essential step toward overcoming fragmentation and perpetual sustainability challenges, and is captured as such in our 2030 strategy and Theory of Change.

Despite this progress, we observe that the uptake in the language of systems does not always indicate either a deep understanding of the concept, or a commitment to changing the status quo ways of working that we know to be inconsistent with the philosophy (e.g. short-term funding and silo approaches). This is not surprising. Governments (North and South) are themselves large and complex systems – and changing them takes time and effort. A positive development is that a raft of new calls for proposals from major donors make explicit use of systems language and has, we hope, the potential to translate the adoption of language into behaviour change. In particular, we hope it will help underpin more aligned efforts to listen to and support national leadership in fostering both rapid change while appreciating the slower and messier aspects of systems strengthening that will need to continue for decades to come.

Since the development of our 2017-2030 Strategic Framework in late 2016, systems thinking has been fully integrated throughout all of IRC's programmes and global influencing. In 2020 we continued to build our own capacity to further remove systems blindness, and to get comfortable seeing and addressing power dynamics and other non-technical drivers of systems.

We have benefited from an increasing number of partners and sector colleagues committed to the systems approach. The Agenda for Change, now in its fourth year, has grown from four to 14 members, and our accelerated partnership with Water For People has catalysed our learning and ability to impact local and national systems for the better.

The 2019 All systems go! Symposium in The Hague remains an inflection point in our rear-view mirror, and we continue to benefit from the momentum generated by this event. Destination 2030, our new shared strategic framework with Water For People, builds on what we have both learned in previous years and increases the emphasis on citizen engagement and generating widespread demand for WASH as a central aspect of systems change and building strong public systems.

We are excited by long-term supporter, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s new 2021-2025 Safe Water Strategy, and their commitment to supporting national systems in their ambitious goals to achieve safely managed drinking water services while emphasising the importance of leaving no one behind.

Total QIS for All countries national



BB all countries national

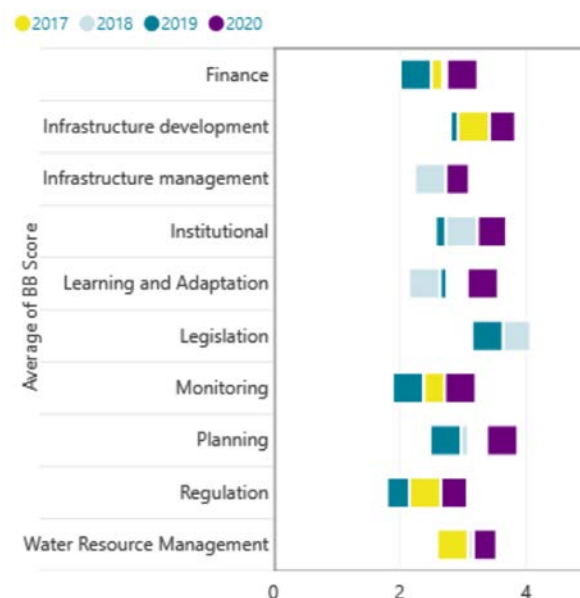


Figure 5. QIS and Building Block scores for all focus countries at national and district levels combined. Each building block is scored on a scale ranging from 0 to 5, where 0 = absent or undeveloped, and 5 = fully developed and applied.

Strengthening WASH Systems in IRC focus countries

Our Country Programmes and district partnerships remain at the heart of our work. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda continue to flourish, with India and Honduras achieving high levels of influence and strong results even with modest resources. In 2020, Mali and Niger hired additional full-time staff and are becoming core focus countries, integrated into IRC’s organisation-wide processes and approaches. New initiatives and consultancies reached more than 26 countries in 2020.

As emphasised in Destination 2030, across our programmes we are seeing how hard-earned progress in improving service levels in partner districts is essential to informing and shaping our national and regional influencing. Our engagement at national levels helps to inform and foster our work and frame our action-research efforts in partner districts. We are seeing the proof of this concept as we orient our mission to continuing direct impact in districts while driving toward scale.

4.2 Burkina Faso

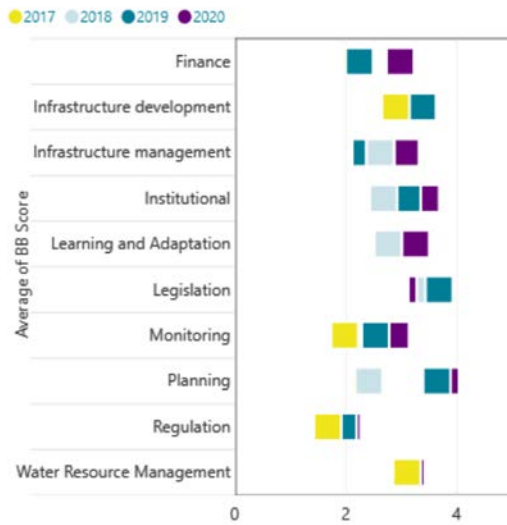


Figure 6: Change in the building blocks for the district level WASH system since 2017, commune of Banfora, Burkina Faso.

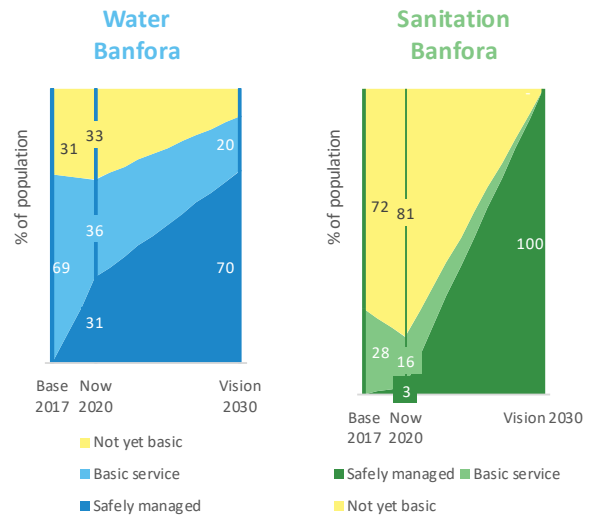


Figure 7: Progress toward the 2030 vision for universal [drinking] water and sanitation services in Banfora, Burkina Faso. Source: IRC Burkina Faso, service level assessment report 2020.

Note: Data on safely managed water services was absent in the 2017 baseline, but an increase in safely managed services was observed during this period due to ONEA extensions. For basic water and sanitation, there have been no new facilities constructed despite demographic growth during this period.

IRC BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE

15 staff - 13 projects - 8 donors

€ 1,341 total invested

€ 460 European Union / European Commission (EU/EC)

€ 325 Department for International Development (DFID)

€ 231 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

€ 325 other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: \$ 2,274.7

Human Development Index: rank 182, score 0.452

Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): 703m³ (2013-17)



WASH service levels

Percentage of population with at least basic services in Burkina Faso (JMP 2017):

- Water: 48%
- Sanitation: 19%
- Hygiene: 12%

Population of Banfora district: 154k

Context

IRC has supported WASH systems strengthening in Burkina Faso with a permanent presence since 2012. IRC Burkina Faso is a consistent, heard and respected voice in supporting local and national level systems change in the country.

Unfortunately, the deterioration of the security situation together with other unforeseen institutional and social problems has hampered national progress since 2016. These challenges have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

District level results

Banfora district progressed well with the implementation of its WASH master plan launched in 2018. Its progress is aided by the political leadership of the mayor, technical leadership of the national water utility ONEA, and the strong commitment of various donors, NGOs and community based organisations.

As 2020 service monitoring by IRC shows, these resources helped reach 31% of the district's population with safely managed water services. This shows that we are on the right track towards achieving universal access and the municipality's target to provide a safely managed water service to 70% of its population by 2030.

In terms of sanitation, although a 3% increase in access to a safely managed service was measured, only 28% of the population has access to a basic service. This level of service quality gives us a clear direction on the areas to be prioritised in Banfora's master plan. We also note that there are efforts to be made in terms of good hygiene practices.

WASH services in schools and health centres are still a problem. In terms of sanitation, the situation is critical because only 57% of schools and none of the health centres have a basic service. In collaboration with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), IRC has tested and documented solutions for improving WASH in schools and health care facilities. However, continued investment in schools and health centres needs to be prioritised in the next two years in order to achieve 100% access to basic WASH services.

IRC's achievements in 2020

IRC is a critical partner in implementing the master plan. We have supported the municipality and all its local partners to develop an operational plan for the period 2021-2025 to complement the visionary strategy of the master plan.

In 2020, we supported local authorities to prepare an annual plan, perform a joint review of the master plan and continue aligning partners – the water utility (ONEA), the regional directorate of water and sanitation representing the central government (DREA), CRS and the local NGO Espace Culturel Gambidi (ECG) – around the district's joint vision.

The Mayor's office and its partners are working, with the technical support of IRC, to continue mobilising the resources necessary to achieve their 2030 vision. Between 2018 and 2020, € 13 million were mobilised for financing the master plan. Much of this comes from the Ministry of WASH and the national water utility, ONEA.

We managed to mobilise resources for two new projects in Banfora: Charity Water committed to finance improving drinking water services through a grant to CRS; and One Drop funds ECG's work on WASH in health centres.

IRC has supported the development of a communications strategy with a road map for fundraising the master plan for the coming years. In 2020, a study we conducted on the funding gap in financing Banfora's 2030 target helped to better understand the funding challenges around the plan's successful implementation.



Figure 8: Financing the vision in Banfora⁶

National level results

Towards scale for demonstrated solutions from Banfora

Banfora's achievements and strengthened collaboration with ONEA have provided a basis for an EU grant for upscaling district WASH systems strengthening to 93 new districts across the country. Five of these districts will be supported by IRC in a master plan in collaboration with ONEA.

Advocating for political commitment, institutional reform and equitable emergency response

At national level, since 2016 we have worked to leverage and galvanise the political commitment of the Head of State and the First Lady.

One of the highlights of 2020 was the confirmation of WASH as a priority by the candidates of the presidential elections. The winner, incumbent President M. Kaboré was the candidate who presented the strongest commitment to WASH. This confirms the importance of WASH in the political agenda by 2025. Influencing campaigns by IRC have repeatedly and over many years called on candidates to prioritise WASH in their manifestos and make clear commitments to systems strengthening. The fact that President M. Kaboré again emphasised WASH in his campaign for re-election bears testimony to the impact of the steady drumbeat of this influencing work.

6. The capital expenditure data is based on Banfora's master plan - Commune de Banfora : municipal strategic plan for public water and sanitation services 2018 - 2030. <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-strategic-master-plan-banfora-burkina-faso> - and a finance gap analysis conducted by IRC.

The institutional reform initiated in 2016 has progressed slowly. As Parliament expressed interest in monitoring the progress of the reform, we prepared a strategic analysis note on the performance of the WASH sector from 2016 to 2019 and included recommendations.

In 2020, we also focused on strengthening our partnership with UNICEF to focus on highlighting sector governance issues. When gaps in the national government's public policy response to COVID-19 became apparent, we organised **advocacy campaigns** to raise equity issues that threatened to leave rural populations behind. We signed an agreement with UNICEF to capitalise on the Government's response to COVID-19 and continue building on the momentum created.

Strengthening WASH systems: what's next

With the new strategic phase 2021-2025 we are moving towards a new approach to influencing that helps overcome the bottlenecks experienced from 2017 to 2020 in institutional reform and national systems strengthening. The focus will be on institutional reform for effectiveness of service delivery and a sustainable financing strategy for completing the national plans for SDG 6. This means that engaging with the Head of State, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, the Minister of WASH and the Head of ONEA, the national water utility, is key. By combining this with technical support at both national and district levels, IRC Burkina Faso is expecting to continue its contribution to building strong WASH systems in the country.

Activity and output in focus

IRC Burkina Faso implemented a massive hand and surface hygiene campaign for preventing COVID-19 thanks to the financial support of Unilever and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Since August 2020, schools, radios, TV stations and events in Burkina Faso have increasingly been singing and dancing to the tune of clean hands. The total reach of the campaign by February 2021 was 2.8 million people in Ouagadougou and Banfora district. Learn more [here](#).

4.3 Ethiopia



Figure 9: Change in the building blocks for the WASH system in Mille woreda since 2017.

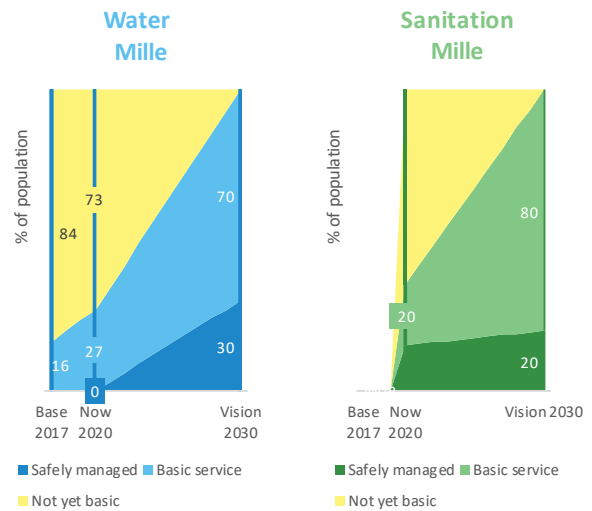


Figure 10: Progress toward the 2030 vision for universal drinking water and sanitation services in Mille, Ethiopia. Note: The sanitation baseline is from 2020. Source: IRC



Figure 11: Change in the building blocks for the WASH system in South Ari woreda since 2017.

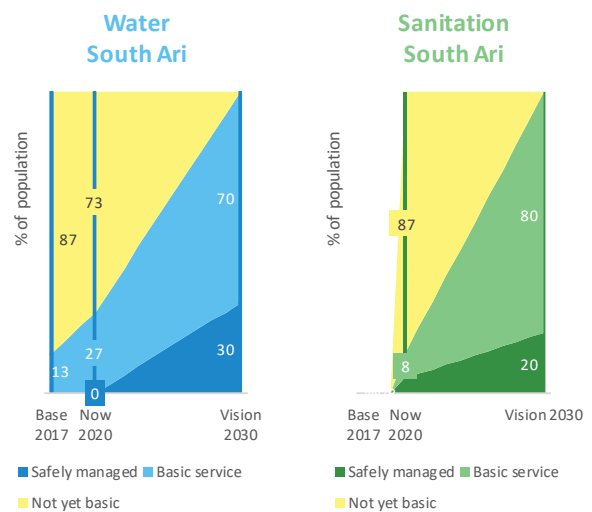


Figure 12: Progress toward the 2030 vision for universal drinking water and sanitation services in South Ari, Ethiopia. Note: The sanitation baseline is from 2020. Source: IRC

IRC ETHIOPIA AT A GLANCE

14 staff - 17 projects - 10 donors

€ 1,254 total invested

€ 815 USAID - € 142 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

€ 98 Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS)

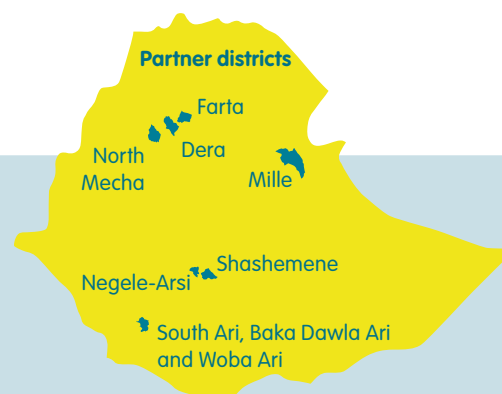
€ 199 other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: \$ 2,221

Human Development Index: rank 173, score 0.485

Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): 1 147m³ (2013-17)



WASH service levels

Percentage of population with at least basic services in Ethiopia (JMP 2017):

- **Water: 41%**
- **Sanitation: 7%**
- **Hygiene: 8%**

Population of Farta, Dera, North Mecha, Negelle Arsi, South Ari, Mille and Shashamane Zuriam districts: 1,7M people

Context

IRC has been supporting WASH systems strengthening in Ethiopia through projects for over a decade, and has a permanent presence since 2019. IRC is a trusted partner in the country at the national, regional (sub national), and district levels, leading local learning alliances in seven districts and playing a key role in national working groups such as the National WASH Financing Working Group composed of development partners and government, the Initiative on Strengthening Water Supply System Management with the Water Development Commission, and the National WASH System Strengthening Working Group composed of local development partners.

Even though the support to WASH at a national level has grown significantly since 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to reduced budgets for WASH in some areas. An internal conflict between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Regional Government of Tigray, and the deteriorating security situation also had implications on some activities at regional and district levels.

Nevertheless, many of our activities could continue and where it was necessary, we adapted to the circumstances. We participated in the national COVID-19 response taskforce established under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Water, Irrigation & Energy, and contributed to the development of a comprehensive response plan.

District level results

In 2020, IRC Ethiopia worked closely with seven districts (woredas) with an estimated total population of 1,735,000 people. These districts were: Farta, Dera, Mille, Negelle Arsi, North Mecha, Shashamane Zuriam, South Ari, Baka Dawla Ari and Woba Ari.. Despite our support, and the spending of resources by users, government, partner organisations and other private actors in the last few years, WASH services in these districts are not improving and are sometimes even deteriorating.

There are various explanations for this, but the main factor is the lack of a concrete vision and efforts to change the status quo, and the lack of coordination amongst key actors. In this context, our efforts are focused on developing master plans as a shared vision and strategy to garner more effective collective action and improve coordination. WASH road maps (master plans) are a crucial first step in moving towards achieving SDG 6 in our partner districts.

In districts where there are strong learning alliances, there was better progress in District Master planning and with less support from IRC. In South Ari, Negelle Arsi, and Shashamane a “District Master planning Team” was established by local actors (in South Ari, nominated by the learning alliance), to lead the process. This has resulted in six new WASH master plans (in South Ari, Baka Dawla Ari, Woba Ari, Mille, Shashamane and Negelle Arsi districts), supported by IRC through the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership and the Netherlands’ WASH SDG consortium. Implementation of existing plans continued in Farta, Dera and North Metcha with collaborative support from the Millennium Water Alliance partners.

A network of learning alliances across these districts is helping to connect and align key actors while accelerating learning and innovation. By establishing new platforms in districts where they are absent, and ensuring cross-fertilisation with existing sub-national and national platforms and working groups, relationships are built between key stakeholders with knowledge and access to different parts of the WASH system.

Both at national and sub-national levels, the learning alliances and platforms we support are becoming key platforms for learning and sharing in the sector. As the learning alliances mature (such as the ones in Mille and South Ari, both established in 2017), they are becoming more effective in coordinating plans and actions in general and among the sector actors.

New partner districts and reflections on results from earlier engagement

Before and since formally registering in Ethiopia in 2019, IRC Ethiopia has worked in many districts in several different projects. In late 2020, after a careful selection process, we chose two districts that we know well from our work to be long-term partner districts. This marks an important step in the continuing maturation of our country programme.

From 2021 onwards, we will focus on all-round WASH systems strengthening in Negelle Arsi and South Ari – and commit to helping them achieve a vision of universal access by 2030. We will provide extensive support to local government in implementing the master plan and will document learnings for replication elsewhere.

Since we started working in South Ari in 2017, IRC Ethiopia has noticed progress in institutionalising partnership platforms and applying tested WASH service delivery models such as scaling models to other non-pilot villages within and beyond the district’s boundaries. The district has also managed to capitalise the available resources from the partnership and re-build its capacity around monitoring, maintenance, infrastructure management and coordination among WASH sub-sectors regardless of various structural changes that happened in the district including the splitting up of South Ari district into three.

Political and financial commitment is still lagging behind, but this is also linked to the fundamental issue of the political structure of Ethiopia where budget decisions are usually based on equity (calculated by population number) rather than on a calculation of the actual finance needed to bring about envisaged change.

Regional and national level results

IRC Ethiopia played an active role in the country's COVID-19 response in 2020. We supported the national taskforce by supplying hygiene materials for distribution in public areas, health care facilities and quarantine centres. We also approached our partners and donors and worked with them on re-planning the available resources and mobilising new resources to be used for COVID-19 response activities in partner districts and regions.

Other national WASH initiatives maintained momentum. The Sanitation Marketing Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) for which IRC serves as the Secretariat to the Ministry of Health is maturing. In 2020, it had three national, 16 regional and 11 technical working group meetings that focused on improved sanitation.

The partnership with the Ministry of Health through the MSP helped review sanitation policies, guidelines and practices and recommended the outdated national sanitation marketing guidelines to be revised to include current sanitation models and products. These were finalised and approved by the Ministry of Health in 2020. The MSP plays a key role in influencing policies at national level as well as in disseminating best practice models at national and regional levels.

Regional level initiatives are crucial to systems change in Ethiopia. In 2020 in the Afar, Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' regions, covering around 7.5 million people, we strengthened government monitoring systems and related capacity in partnership with local and national government and other WASH actors.

In strengthening the supply chain for improved sanitation products and promoting public-private collaboration and the uptake of sanitation marketing innovations, we also supported the development of market-based sanitation in eight regions.

Output in focus

In 2020, we published two editions of Ethiopia's National Sanitation Marketing and Business Development Newsletter, called 'Zena' Sani Mark in the English and Amharic languages. The first, issue eight, was printed and disseminated in hard copy, and the second, issue nine, was disseminated digitally.

The main partner organisations who are working on disseminating the newsletter are World Vision Ethiopia, the World Bank, Population Services International (PSI), SNV, the Federal Ministry of Health, International Development Enterprises and Community-Led Accelerated WASH (COWASH). Most distribute copies to their regional zonal and district offices all over the country.

Based on feedback from these key partners on distribution numbers we printed 1,000 copies of issue eight in January 2020.

Issue nine was not published in hard copy due to COVID-19 and the travel restrictions. Therefore issue nine was published digitally via IRC's Mailchimp account and MSP Telegram groups for distribution.

4.4 Ghana

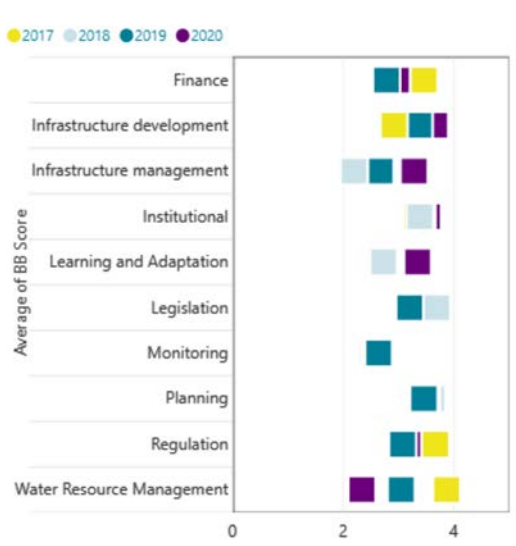


Figure 13: Change in the building blocks for the district level WASH system since 2017, Asutifi North in Ghana.

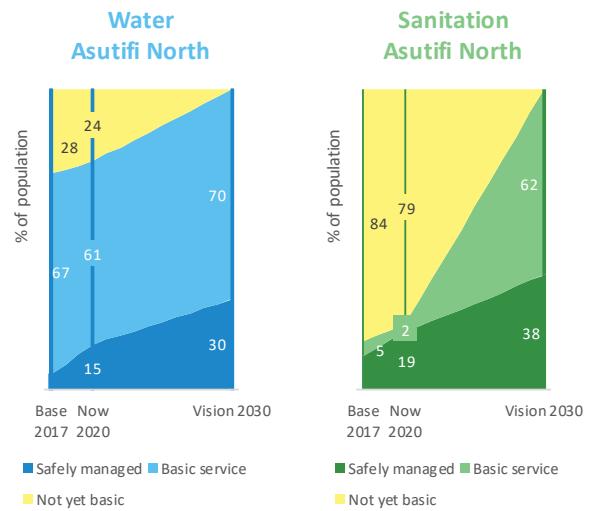


Figure 14: Progress toward the 2030 vision for [universal drinking] water and sanitation in Asutifi North, Ghana.

IRC GHANA AT A GLANCE

15 staff, 1 hosted staff - 17 projects - 8 donors

€ 915 total invested

€ 391 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

€ 335 Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS)

€ 189 other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: \$ 5,413

Human Development Index: rank 138, score 0.611

Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): 1 930m³ (2013-17)

WASH service levels

Percentage of population with at least basic services in Ghana (JMP 2017):

- Water: 81%
- Sanitation: 18%
- Hygiene: 41%

Population of Asutifi North district: 68K (Projection for 2020)

Progress towards the 2030 vision of Asutifi North district*:



Context

The sector in Ghana is charting a new course by formulating new national development policy frameworks, revising sector policies and strategies, and reforming institutions. This includes our long-term partner, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), piloting a new rural utility model. The model's processes are providing an opportunity for the sector to engage and clarify roles, but the roles of local government, the private sector and communities in water service delivery in the future remain unclear, contested and undecided.

IRC and partners working at local and national levels are well placed to constructively engage in sector change dialogue using emerging proof of concept of district-wide WASH systems strengthening.

District level results

The ANAM WASH initiative in Asutifi North district continues to thrive. Well aligned partners and strong local leadership are instrumental in our being on track to achieve IRC Ghana's 2030 vision. The monitoring round we conducted in 2020 showed that steady progress was made in increasing safely managed water services from 5% in 2017 to 15% in 2020 whilst reducing the unserved population without water services from 18% in 2017 to 13% in 2020. We are confident that Asutifi is on track to achieve basic water for all in 2022, from where we will continue to push towards universal access for safely managed and sustainable water services.

We continued to play our hub role in WASH master plan implementation (e.g. coordinating partnerships, monitoring and learning, documentation) as the partnership matured and gained momentum. Efforts to connect to new partners and mobilise additional resources resulted in the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints (LDS) charities joining the ANAM initiative and contributing US\$ 299,079 to extend services to hard-to-reach areas.

Partnership platforms have enabled the provision of a coherent response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We continued to support learning alliances when face-to-face meetings were not possible. One example was an online learning event and webinar on the implications of the 'free water policy', a COVID-19 response activity by national government, in Asutifi North.

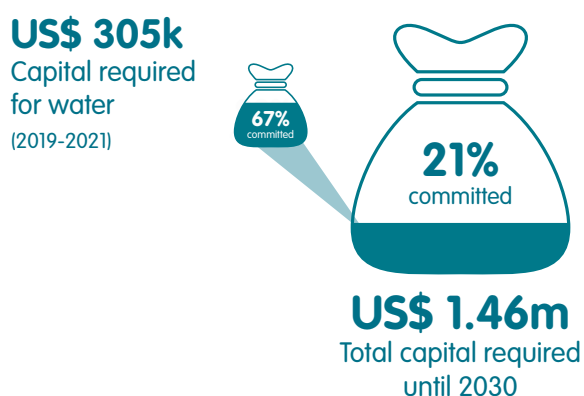


Figure 15: Financing the vision in Asutifi North district⁷

A WASH help desk—initiated by the District Assembly, Netcentric Campaigns and IRC in 2019—has become a space for citizens to raise issues about services. By October 2020, 204 complaints had been received and 150 resolved. Through the ANAM WASH Network—which includes the help desk as well as a local radio show, a website and well-maintained social media platforms—the District Assembly is connecting and engaging with people across the District to advance WASH activities.

7. Costing and financing sustainable WASH services in Asutifi North District. <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/costing-and-financing-sustainable-wash-services-asutifi-north-district>

National level results

Sector change and commitment in Ghana

Political leadership and financial commitment have been strong, despite several changes in the WASH sector.

The future direction of the sector—centralised versus decentralised service delivery, the role of the private sector etc.—makes the roles and responsibilities, including those of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR) and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, unclear. This has resulted in fragmentation. At district level, several models are being piloted to improve water service delivery. These are documented and discussed for sector decision making.

In 2020, the MSWR initiated a process to revise the National Water Policy, an opportunity for the sector to engage and clarify roles. We supported the review of the National Water Policy, organised a study tour for the CWSA on rural utilities, and collaborated with the National Development Planning Commission to document good WASH practice in three districts in Ghana. This documentation is informing the WASH policy framework and planning guidelines for 2022-2025.

In 2020, we reached over 1,000 people with training and events through face-to-face and online meetings. About 45% of these activities were related to learning and adaptation; 20% on capacity building activities; and the remaining 35% on accountability, coordination, and IRC core activities at both the national and district levels.

A key event at the end of the year that we organised jointly with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), WaterAid and Water4/Access Development was the third national learning exchange entitled ‘Strengthening local systems through district-wide initiatives for safe and sustainable WASH service delivery for everyone’ in Accra on 12 November 2020. It was a great opportunity to showcase the innovations and good practices for WASH as a leverage for further interactions on local systems strengthening for replication across the country.

COVID-19 response

The President subsidised citizens’ water bills (April-December 2020), however, those in unserved communities and areas with unreliable services did not benefit. Still, there is evidence that financing for WASH is steadily increasing, especially in 2020, because of the pandemic.

We facilitated an online sector dialogue on ‘WASH and COVID-19 – the Civil Society response’ with participants from over 30 civil society and government organisations from across the country.

We also supported: CWSA’s COVID-19 activities related to public education on hand hygiene in communities; MSWR’s response activities; and the Ghana Health Service’s study on COVID-19 exposure risk assessment.

Output in focus

We supported NDPC with documenting and producing the [Good Practice for WASH booklet](#) and videos for three selected districts including the Asutifi North District ANAM-WASH master plan progress. As documented case studies in the WASH sector that are shared and promoted by NDPC as best practices in achieving SDG 6 in Ghana, these products are significant.

4.5 Honduras

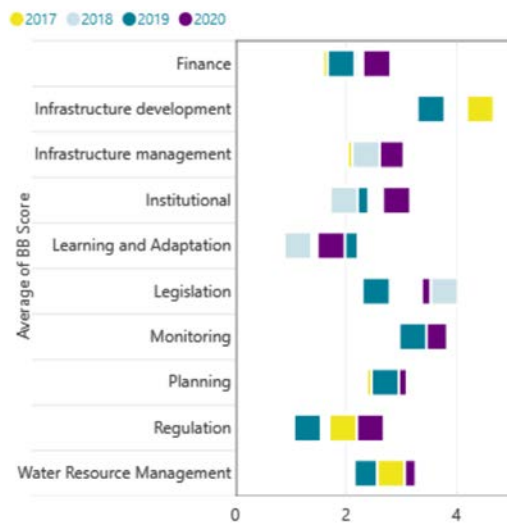


Figure 16: Change in the building blocks for the district level WASH system, all PTPS municipalities.

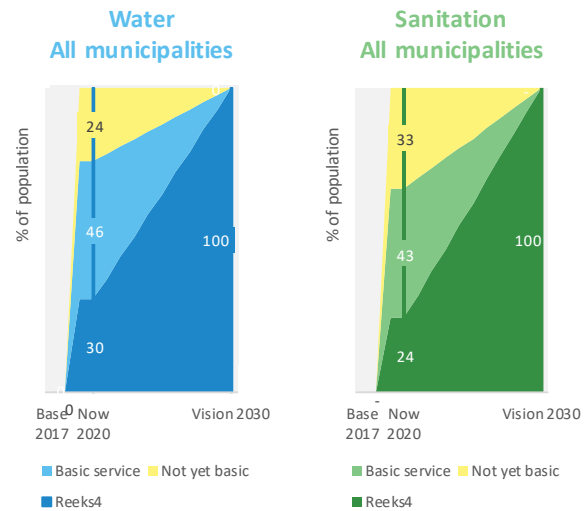
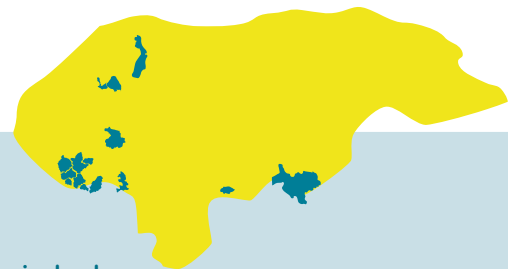


Figure 17: Progress toward the 2030 vision for [universal drinking] water and sanitation in PTPS municipalities.



IRC HONDURAS AT A GLANCE

1 staff, **1** staff hosted under PTPS - **5** projects
4 donors
€ 107 total invested
€ 70 Directorate-General of International Cooperation (DGIS)
€ 37 other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: **\$ 5,728**
 Human Development Index: **rank 132, score 0.634**
 Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): **9 775m³** (2013-17)

WASH service levels
 Percentage of population with at least basic services in Honduras (JMP 2017):

- **Water: 95%**
- **Sanitation: 81%**
- **Hygiene: 84%**

Population of PTPS municipalities: **285K**
 Drinking water service levels in PTPS municipalities: ranging from **37% to 91%**
 Sanitation service levels in PTPS municipalities : ranging from **46% to 94%**

Context

The national government has defined three water and sanitation-related targets—for both basic and safely managed services—and included these in its overall national SDG programme.

While according to 2019 JMP data, the country was and is on track to achieve universal access to at least basic services, there is insufficient data on safely managed services. Whether this will be the case after 2020, is unclear

as the country was hit by two hurricanes—Eta and Iota—which caused great damage to the water infrastructure. A rapid inventory of damages to water supplies showed that in some of the worst affected municipalities, levels of access dropped from 97% to 58%.

Municipal level results

The Para Todos Por Siempre (PTPS) partnership which IRC Honduras co-supports with Water For People has continued to gain in importance, with most national sector actors in Honduras being active members. Even those who are not members coordinate and liaise with PTPS, not only for operational practice, but also for advocacy and policy influencing.

Progress at municipal level varies across municipalities. To increase the efficiency of our efforts and increase the scale of impact, we adopted an approach focused at mancomunidades level (associations of neighbouring municipalities). At that level of scale, it is expected that the greater economies of scale and systems change will be more robust. This is in contrast to the experience with municipalities in PTPS where each has its own trajectory and takes steps forwards and backwards. This year, additional training enabled some municipalities to make progress on capacity, and PTPS members, each in their area of expertise, support municipalities. But overall, systemic change remains very fragile.

In 2020, we continued to work on developing the mancomunidad level approach. In the final quarter, new partnerships were established with mancomunidades in the department of La Paz.

Support to other municipalities and partners associated with PTPS was limited because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. This was partially overcome by providing a series of learning webinars to members. But it meant that little progress was made against municipal-level outcomes.

National level results

At national level, 2020 was characterised by emergency support, both around COVID-19 and in the aftermath of the two hurricanes, resulting in a series of unplanned activities.

PTPS helped activate the WASH emergency round table and develop a COVID-19 response plan from the sector. The plan describes: the current situation of the WASH sector; the level of response and the need to achieve a more effective response; recommendations for implementing activities in the short and medium term; coordination mechanisms; and, the monitoring process. Further to our role in PTPS, we take part in group meetings that discuss the implementation and updating of the plan according to situations that arise.

In the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota, the PTPS Secretariat supported the coordination of the mapping of the damage. A database was created and shared by the various government agencies with responsibilities in water and sanitation, and information was collected from almost 1,000 water supply systems.

National level influencing focused on articulating an agenda for sector reform and getting political support for it. There is now a Member of Parliament who is taking up WASH issues in Congress and we supported the

Government to become more engaged in SWA. This is important since SWA will be an ally in advocating for increasing funding in the WASH sector.

At the request of the Government of Honduras, technical assistance is being provided for the revision of the sheets and protocols of the national WASH information system. Various other PTPS partners were also participating in these meetings. This, and other indications, show that PTPS' partnerships have further strengthened and have put us in a stronger position for influencing.

Output in focus

In 2020, two more guidelines were produced: one on developing municipal WASH baseline diagnostics and one on municipal WASH policy formulation. These complement other guidelines that jointly form the basis for municipal WASH system strengthening. They are available [here](#) and [here](#). Moving forward, similar guidelines for the mancomunidad level will be developed.

4.6 India

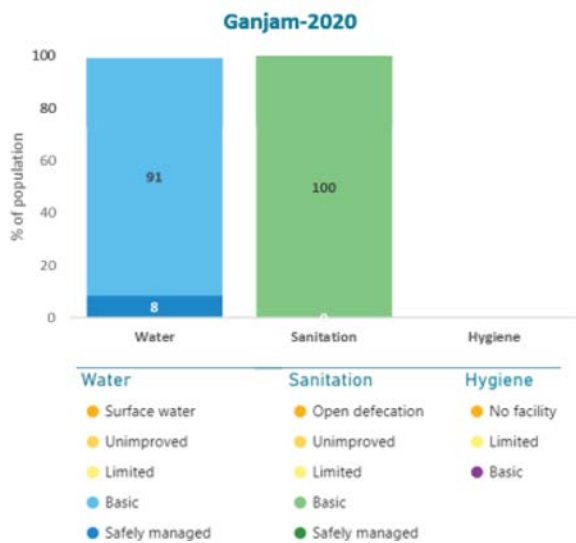


Figure 18: 2020 service levels in Ganjam, India

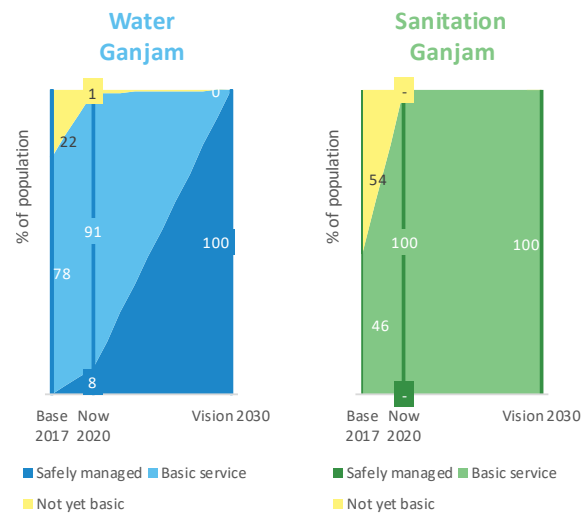


Figure 19: Progress toward the 2030 vision for water and sanitation in Ganjam, India

IRC INDIA AT A GLANCE

2 staff - 4 projects - 3 donors

€ 312 total invested

€ 282 Directorate-General of International Cooperation (DGIS)

€ 30 other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: \$ 6,700

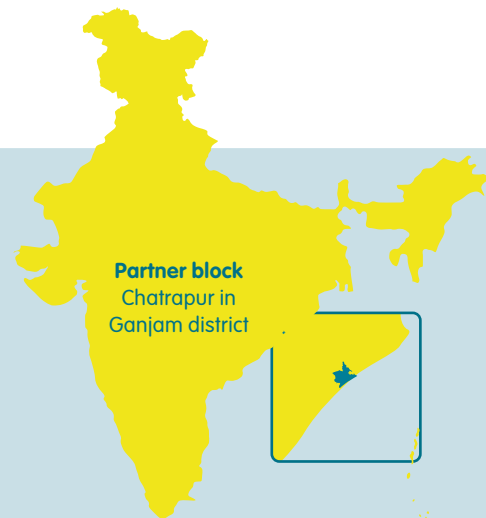
Human Development Index: rank 131, score 0.645

Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): 1 427m³ (2013-17)

WASH service levels

Percentage of households with at least basic services in India (JMP, 2017):

- Water: 93%
- Sanitation: 60%
- Hygiene: 60%



Partner block
Chatrapur in
Ganjam district

Population of Ganjam district: 3.5M (Census 2011)

Population of partner block: 95K

Drinking water service levels in Ganjam district: 99% with at least basic services

Data comes from the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India

Sanitation service levels in Ganjam district: 100% with at least basic services

Data comes from the SBM dashboard, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India

Context

The political and financial commitment to water supply—which had been focused on sanitation for the last five years—at the national level has improved. The commitment to water supply is backed by the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a national rural drinking water programme that assists, empowers and facilitates states/urban territories in planning participatory rural water supply strategies that ensure that each household will have a functional tap (i.e. household connections to piped water supply) by 2024.

This is a huge commitment not only in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of the capacity of institutions to deliver and, more importantly, maintain these schemes. We have seen how political commitment has helped India leapfrog to its sanitation target. This gives hope that the country will largely meet the target for water supply. At present, the coverage of piped water supply is 11%. It is crucial to include the institutional capacity to change their mindset to providing services beyond just the creation of the infrastructure.

District and state level results

For 2020, our focus was on increasing and strengthening finance mechanisms and institutions in Ganjam district in the state of Odisha.

According to the JJM dashboard, 24.53% of households in rural Ganjam have piped water supply access. The Ministry of Jal Shakti states that more than 99% of homes in rural Ganjam have full access to water (piped water, tube well etc.). With both JJM and prior to that the Odisha state government initiative, BASUDHA, efforts to connect villages to piped water supply have increased.

In terms of sanitation, Ganjam district has been declared ODF, with 100% of households having access to toilets. Since the Swachh Bharat Mission, the coverage of household toilets has drastically increased in the country. Though the official report states near complete coverage, actual use is still a concern as is safe sanitation for poorer households.

Focusing on finance and institutional capacity building

In participatory district level dialogue, stakeholders agreed that: there is a dire need to strengthen the Gram Panchayats (village local governments); greater technical support on the ground is key; and, more integrated thinking to address systemic issues is needed. In two district level workshops in Ganjam (Odisha) and Samastipur (Bihar), we validated our preliminary findings that a lack of institutional capacities and transparency affect budgetary flows for WASH. These systemic issues in funding flows for WASH in the villages were highlighted in a national level webinar attended by government and civil society representatives.

We worked closely with UNICEF and the Odisha state water utility, the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO), to provide technical assistance to the utility to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission. We prepared a communication strategy for the utility in which the focus was shifted from prioritising engineering to engaging with customers before, during and after construction. The communication strategy will also pinpoint the demand of customers (especially the urban poor), and hold the utility accountable for its performance. Further roll out and engagements were limited due to the pandemic.

COVID-19 adaptation

We actively participated in COVID-19 response activities, such as assessing quarantine centres in Samastipur (Bihar) and Ganjam (Odisha) districts. Our recommendations, such as introducing quarantine centre checklists and including soap in the public distribution system, were endorsed and used by other multi-lateral organisations. UNICEF adapted our assessment in its training of members (39,000 people) of rural local bodies and used it as a basis for a similar activity in quarantine centres in Odisha for the Odisha Livelihood Mission.

We could not conduct some of our planned activities due to travel restrictions. In the absence of field visits, there were regular catch-up calls with partners, and webinars and video calls were used to conduct dissemination activities.

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2020, IRC India organised a public fundraiser to support women's capacity building workshops in Odisha which successfully raised € 2,845. Ganjam District, the planned district for the workshops, had the highest number of COVID-19 cases as migrant workers returned to their villages of origin. The workshops had thus to be postponed.

National level results

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to modify many of our plans. It also provided opportunities, such as being asked to be part of national level working groups.

We were part of the hand hygiene task force, along with UNICEF and WaterAid, to push the hygiene agenda in the country. Preparations for a road map for India, to be submitted to the Government of India, were initiated. The road map outlines steps to incorporate hand hygiene into existing Government programmes across the water and sanitation, health and nutrition, education, rural and urban development sectors.

COVID-19 has bolstered the need to pay attention to hand washing with soap. Thus, to commemorate Global Handwashing Day (15 October), a three-part webinar series was jointly organised by IRC, WaterAid India, UNICEF, WHO and the Aga Khan Foundation. The webinars were on: technologies and innovations for handwashing; behaviour change; and, monitoring hand hygiene. The webinars attracted 13,000 participants.

We also contributed to the operations and maintenance manual for community sanitation complexes. In response to interest expressed by the Government of India to set up community sanitation complexes in rural areas, UNICEF, the Aga Khan Foundation and IRC decided to compile a manual on building management, operation and maintenance. IRC and the Aga Khan Foundation are leading the development of the manual.

Output in focus

In 2019, the State Government of Odisha showed its commitment towards WASH in schools by launching the Odisha Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar or Odisha Clean School Award. In collaboration with UNICEF, we created a booklet with best practice case studies from 15 award-winning schools. The case studies demonstrate how WASH in schools not only retains school attendance but also increases school enrolment. They show how children can positively influence the WASH behaviour of the wider community. Further, they also demonstrate how regular operations and maintenance of WASH facilities contribute to their continued functionality.

4.7 Uganda

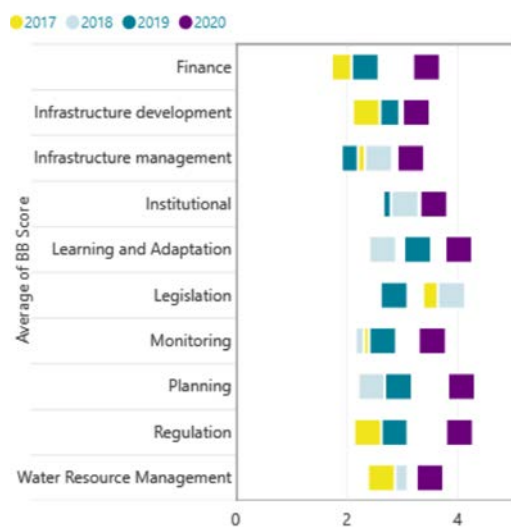


Figure 20: Change in the building blocks for the district level WASH system since 2017, Kabarole District, Uganda.

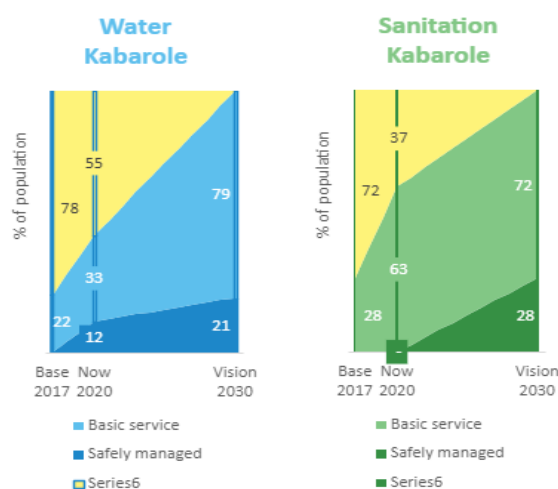


Figure 21: Progress toward the 2030 vision for [universal drinking] water and sanitation services in Kabarole, Uganda.

IRC UGANDA AT A GLANCE

11 staff - **13** projects - **7** donors

€ 1,064 total invested

€ 553 Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) - **€ 220** Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

€ 134 USAID - **€ 157** other donors

Amounts in thousands of euros

Gross Domestic Product per capita in PPP: **\$ 2,187**

Human Development Index: **rank 159, score 0.544**

Renewable water resource per capita (Source: FAO aquastat): **1 460m³** (2013-17)

WASH service levels

Percentage of population with at least basic services in Uganda (JMP 2017):

- **Water: 49%**
- **Sanitation: 18%**
- **Hygiene: 21%**

Population of Kabarole district: **325K**

Population of Bunyangabu district: **195K**



Context

We continue to align our interventions to the 2017-2021 IRC Uganda strategic plan, the SDG 6 targets, and Uganda’s Vision 2040 and National Development Plan. Uganda’s Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) was launched in 2020 and IRC Uganda’s new 2021-2026 planning framework and future interventions will need to be aligned to this new national policy document. These national frameworks show increasing political and financial commitment to WASH in the country.

A trend analysis shows a slight improvement in WASH sector budgets for 2019-2020 at UGX 1.8 trillion (€ 415 million) against an estimated annual requirement of UGX 5.10 trillion (€ 1.2 billion). This large funding gap remains an impediment to leaving no one behind with WASH service provision.

The sector has also undergone progressive changes to its strategy. In 2020, a new Rural Water Operation and Maintenance Framework was rolled out which marks a shift toward more professional rural services. The National Water and Sewerage Corporation, and the Regional Umbrella Utilities, are becoming key actors even in small towns and more rural parts of the country.

District level results

The status of WASH services in Kabarole

Less than two years after the launch of the Kabarole district master plan in 2019, we are starting to see exciting results in terms of improved service levels for Kabarole's residents. The number of rural residents using unprotected water sources decreased by around 11,000 between 2017 and 2019. In the same period, the number of people accessing safely managed services more than doubled from an estimated 16,300 to 40,900. Our next service level analysis is planned for 2021 and will support reviewing gaps and making appropriate recommendations for WASH service improvement.

These results are delivered by strong partnerships—with Kabarole District Local Government at its heart—with utilities and NGOs. In 2020, we saw long-nurtured partnerships delivering results. Across the district, the partnerships are leading to greater coordination and targeted planning which are improving efficiency. District Water and Sanitation Coordination meetings and our cross-cutting Hub support play a major role.

A groundbreaking tripartite agreement between IRC Uganda, the District, and the National Water and Sewerage Corporation has brought innovative approaches to extending piped water supplies to unserved communities, and is underpinning some of the improved WASH financing and service improvement in the district. A successful first phase has led to new plans and an agreement for a second phase of this work to extend piped water to Kabende sub-county in the district. Our partnership with the National Water and Sewerage Corporation and the regional utility, the Mid-Western Umbrella for Water and Sanitation, improved the performance of the Kasenda Water Supply System.

Another exciting result is that sanitation coverage in Kijura town increased from 55% to 85%. This was the result of our support to the training of Kabarole's Environmental Health Workers on PHAST approaches, and our work on sensitisation and developing sanitation improvement road maps. We followed up this work with Kijura town council, developing a road map and partnering with the local NGO HEWASA to conduct community barazas (community based information fora to reflect on progress in government programmes together with citizens) on sanitation improvement focusing on water quality, gender equity and social inclusion. Building on this success, we will support scaling up to develop sanitation plans for Mugusu, Kijura, Kasenda and Kiko town councils.

Learning alliances and partnerships in Kabarole and Bunyangabu

As the hub for partners funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in Uganda, IRC Uganda is nurturing a growing movement toward achieving universal services both within Kabarole District, across the Midwestern Region, and nationally. In 2020, as the partnership matures, we focused on improving communication, monitoring and learning among partners to amplify successes and accelerate scale up.

In Kabarole's neighbouring district, Bunyangabu, a WASH road map for the district is in progress. Bunyangabu's learning alliance, the District WASH Task Team, convenes regularly to find solutions to bring about WASH change in the district. Though this alliance is at a much earlier stage than that of Kabarole, Bunyangabu has benefited from learning from Kabarole's experiences and efforts.

The Kabarole District WASH Task Team, and Kabarole and Bunyangabu Hand Pump Mechanics Associations (HPMAs) were trained in communication, advocacy, community engagement, lobby and advocacy for WASH and IWRM. Bunyangabu HPMAs were also trained and supported in developing a business plan for improving water services and in viewing themselves as entrepreneurs.

A study on the pay as you fetch approach in Kabarole produced useful findings on the challenges and opportunities of the model. These have informed work planning in the districts as well as generated insights for the implementation of the new national operation and maintenance framework.

COVID-19 adaptation

In 2020, notwithstanding the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, IRC Uganda endeavoured to strengthen relations with various partners, coalitions and institutions.

One ongoing priority for our engagement with Kabarole district is to ensure that all health care facilities have adequate WASH services. Working with the local HPMA, we renovated toilets in 12 health care facilities which now meet WHO standards. To reduce the chances of health care workers transmitting diseases, and more recently COVID-19, we have worked with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Uganda Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI) since 2019 to introduce a new system for the local production of alcohol-based hand rub. We also joined efforts with the District Health Officer, IDI, Baylor College of Medicine and the Children's Foundation Uganda to provide personal protective equipment and training on infection control and prevention for health workers.

National level results

At the national level, we continued to engage with those who can drive systemic change towards achieving SDG 6. These engagements resulted in the launch and dissemination of the national Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Framework, which we also contributed to. The Framework is expected to guide achieving improved O&M targets across the country. We supported the Ministry of Water and Environment's Infrastructure Operations and Maintenance Department to carry out the regional launch of the Framework in Rural Water and Sanitation Regional Center 6.

With funding from the Water Supply Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), we had a role in the COVID-19 response, working in collaboration with UWASNET and the National Hand Washing Initiative to implement COVID-19 response activities.

We have also seen progress and engaged in public sensitisation on menstrual hygiene. We collaborated with the Menstrual Hygiene Management Coalition of the Ministry of Education and Sports and supported developing a National Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Strategy, a National MHH Monitoring Framework and national manuals and guidelines.

Our engagement with national level learning platforms has increased WASH stakeholder learning and coordination in improved WASH services at district and national levels. IRC actively participated in the National Sanitation Working Group and the Good Governance Thematic Groups; and played an active role during Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK 2020), at the AFWA (Africa Water Congress), and on the SuSaNA Forum and WASH CSO forum platforms. Its efforts went on promoting advocacy and learning for improved WASH service provision.

Output in focus

An advocacy video on WASH in health care facilities shows the challenges that Kabarole district in Uganda is facing and what the local government, IRC and other partners are doing to address these challenges. youtu.be/fudA8E4vLxU

4.8 New focus countries

Context and general reflections

In addition to our focus countries, we also work in other countries with our partners.

Our 2017-2030 strategic framework expresses the intention to expand our focus countries to up to 10 by 2021. In 2020 we narrowed down to four potential new focus countries: Bangladesh in South Asia, and Benin, Mali, and Niger in West Africa. Mali and Niger are in the crucial Sahel sub-region.

We have worked with our partners to further build up programmes at country level to acquire more funding for these Country Programmes. While COVID-19 brought opportunities in established Country Programmes, this was less the case for the new focus countries. We could not do all the planned activities and the virtual environment challenged our efforts to strengthen our less established partnerships.

Despite COVID-19 challenges, ongoing insurgency and insecurity across the region, political unrest due to the coup in Mali and uncertainty around elections in Niger, we nevertheless succeeded to deliver around 75% of our planned work, proving the resilience and motivation of our team and partners.

This, and the clear demand we see for our approach, led us to take the decision to start working towards the formal registration of Country Programmes in Mali and Niger. In both countries, we will build on the work started with Conrad N. Hilton Foundation support by focusing on WASH in health care facilities as the entry point for more general WASH systems strengthening. This has proven to be a practical and pragmatic way to work in countries with very limited decentralised capacity. A baseline assessment of WASH systems was carried out and the results will inform the multi-annual programme strategy for the Sahel region and will also be used as the starting point for collective action with existing and new partners.

In Benin and Bangladesh, we worked with fewer resources, consolidating and building on existing programmes including Watershed and the SDG WASH Consortium in Bangladesh. At the time of writing, our longer term plans for Bangladesh remain unclear.

Preparations for further collaboration with Water For People started successfully and now inform regional strategies for South Asia, Latin America and West Africa.

4.8.1 Results in Mali

Guided by a district WASH master plan in each, we are working with our partner World Vision to support the mayors of Nossombougou, Ouolodo, and Tioribougou districts to improve access to basic water services in health care facilities and schools.

Political buy-in for the partnership's work is clearly visible. As a result of the training that we facilitated, key elements of the local WASH systems have improved. The districts have established a water and sanitation service which gives the districts a focal point for WASH issues and facilitates the regular monitoring of progress.

Despite the fragile context, 34 schools and six health centres in the three districts now have basic water services, and 20 of these schools also have basic sanitation and hand washing facilities. In 2019, of the four health care facilities in Nossombougou, only one had access to basic water services. In Ouolodo, only one of the three health care facilities had basic water services, while in Tioribougou, two of the three health care facilities had access to basic water services. Just over half of the 48 schools across the three districts had basic water services in 2018.

We have also secured commitment and funding for the capital needed to work towards achieving the master plans' water visions.

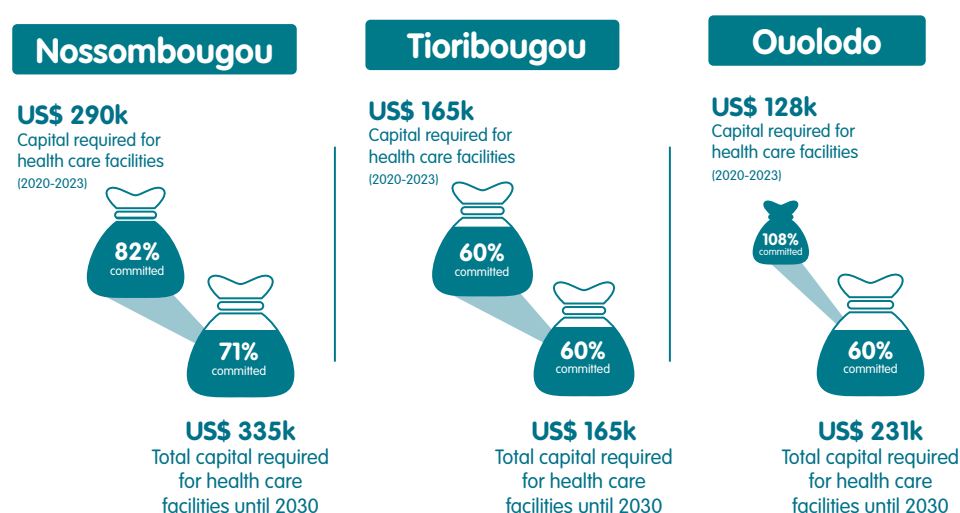


Figure 22: Total capital required by and committed to the 2030 vision⁸

8. Funding gap and investments needs for drinking water supply and sanitation in schools and health care facilities by 2030 (2020)

4.8.2 Results in Niger

While political buy-in and collaboration by partners in Makalondi and Torodi districts are supporting increased alignment of strategies, plans and action, the fragility of the context in Niger poses challenges for implementation. During the year, 94 of the 250 schools in the two districts were closed due to security issues. We measured WASH progress in 2020, and of the 156 schools still open to students, 27 have basic water access and 20 have basic sanitation services.

Despite these challenges, we believe we are making progress in understanding and strengthening local and national systems. For instance, stories and comprehensive data collected in the districts triggered joint advocacy and national level interest. We have also helped the districts conduct finance studies to better understand the costs and gaps related to their 2030 vision. In 2021, we will continue to support the districts with identifying reliable sources of finance for direct support and systems strengthening.

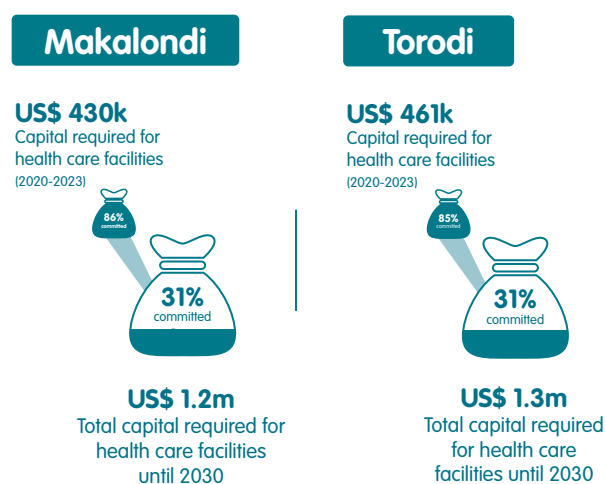


Figure 23: Total capital required and committed for the 2030 vision⁹

At national level, IRC and World Vision worked with Helvetas, WaterAid, Eau et Assainissement pour l'Afrique, the Ministry of Water and Sanitation and the Ministry of Public Health. Following the mid-term evaluation of PROSEHA, the Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Sector Programme, recommendations were made to the Ministry of Water and Sanitation. These included revising indicators and targets for the subsequent phases of PROSEHA, and developing and implementing an advocacy strategy for the water and sanitation sector with a focus on mobilising financial resources.

Output in focus

A set of advocacy and outreach materials share the story and lessons learned to date of collective action by organisations supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Safe Water Strategy. This includes a brief that focuses on Niger and reflects on how organisations are jointly strengthening the systems needed to deliver sustainable safe water, sanitation and hygiene services to health care facilities and schools within partner districts in Niger by 2030.

9. Funding gap and investments needs for drinking water supply and sanitation in schools and health care facilities by 2030 (2020)

4.9 Global Programme

Context

IRC's Global Programming is focused on three main outcomes:

- strong political and financial commitment for WASH;
- innovation of a range of fit-for-purpose service delivery models;
- strong capacity of key actors.

IRC's Global Hub is a respected think tank for the sector focused on learning how we can achieve SDG 6.1 and 6.2. We know we will not achieve the SDGs without reaching beyond the WASH sector and our Communications and Influencing Department (CID) is seeking to turn our evidence and arguments into influence within and especially beyond the WASH sector. IRC Consult delivers high-quality advisory work making our systems strengthening skills available to more organisations and countries.

The Global Hub and CID have an organisation wide remit, offering support to and close collaboration with Country Programmes in addition to delivering our global programme of influencing and knowledge sharing.

4.9.1 Global results in 2020

The desired global results are three-fold:

1. Secured political and financial commitment to WASH Systems Strengthening for SDG 6.
2. A range of fit-for-purpose models that are sustained, documented and are being adapted appropriately for replication in different contexts.
3. The most influential actors have the capacity to strengthen national and local systems (Technical assistance).

Despite COVID-19 challenges, we made significant progress toward these three outcomes. The highlights included the launch of a new dashboard that provides an up-to-date summary of IRC's impacts. The dashboard is an important part of documenting and promoting systems strengthening and its impacts in countries and globally.

While acknowledging the year's challenges, we also secured strong new partnerships that help reduce fragmentation in the sector and increase our synergies and impact. A new strategic partnership with Water For People resulted in the development of a joint 2021-2030 strategy that sets higher goals and strengthens our ability to reach 20 million people locally, 200 million people through national WASH systems strengthening, and 2 billion people globally through our influencing activities. This strategic partnership and a new collaboration with UNICEF to develop a facility around systems strengthening in Africa reflects our strong positioning on WASH systems strengthening.

Secured political and financial commitment to WASH Systems Strengthening for SDG 6 - (Influencing).

COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and the world's increased attention on the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene, were a unique powerful backdrop to devise and deliver advocacy, communication and campaign activities to target new audiences. In 2020 finance ministers around the world participated in a call-to-action meeting about WASH service financing, organised by SWA.

Everywhere the political pressure to improve WASH services needs to come from citizens. In 2020, IRC concluded the five-year Watershed empowering citizens programme, with IRC successfully leading a consortium that has strengthened the capacities of networks and CSOs. Watershed-supported CSOs have contributed, both directly and indirectly, to 90 local and national government policy changes across seven countries. More than 500 tracked outcomes include more space for civic engagement, greater accountability and sustainability of service delivery and better services for the marginalised. The legacy of the programme includes more than 100 knowledge products for different audiences, an online training course on developing an advocacy strategy and a larger [campaign #VoicesforWater](#).

The campaign called on NGOs, governments, and funders to prioritise resources to support civil society organisations (CSOs) as drivers of change and as a means of accelerating progress on SDG 6. Reaching nearly two million people through social media, the campaign demands the right to water and sanitation for all. The campaign was also commended by leading organisations such as SWA, the World Bank, UN-Water, African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation, Netherlands Water Partnership, Partos and others.

As part of the global finance minister's meeting, government officials around the world received concrete guidance on how to more effectively accelerate WASH in their countries while leaving no one behind. Our efforts to influence the audiences beyond WASH and Finance Ministers, and reach highest executive levels, will continue into 2021, playing a central role in our influencing strategy through 2030.

Alongside IRC's storytelling champion, Ikenna Azuike, we solidified a show format as part of a campaign for 2021 and 2022. The campaign aims to win hearts and minds among Dutch and global activists/non-sector experts and build bridges between WASH and health, climate, financial and social issues.

We also worked to improve our internal capacity to continue and elevate our influencing work. A small team from CID played a central role in providing leadership on IRC communications and advocacy with a focus on key non-sector audiences. CID and the IRC Global Hub established a new Editorial Board to act on behalf of the Management Team as the decision-maker, advisor, enabler and gatekeeper for all communication and advocacy activities, products and promotions. The new Board will deliver on the promise to achieve fewer, bigger, better outputs and activities.

Outputs in focus

One important output was SWA's new [handbook for finance ministers](#). IRC played a key role in the development of this first of its kind resource, and strongly supported related promotions in various ways such as through inputs to the finance ministers meetings and related processes.

We ran a [campaign](#) to stress the importance of strong water systems as a crucial requirement of building resilience against this and future pandemics. On social media, this campaign generated over 206,000 impressions and 157,000 media views, and was shared with almost to 400 contacts that are key for IRC.

["A range of fit-for-purpose models that are sustained, documented and are being adapted appropriately for replication in different contexts" - \(Think tank\).](#)

Systems strengthening, as a philosophy and approach, has gained incredible momentum in the WASH sector since IRC set out its systems strengthening influencing agenda in 2017. The language of systems strengthening is seen in calls for proposals from USAID and other major donors, and in publications and consortia research agendas. As the term ‘systems approach’ means different things to different people, we focus on monitoring the demand for and use of tools and philosophies aligned with our understanding of systems strengthening by these different actors.

Inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms—a cornerstone of our systems strengthening approaches—were often heralded as an essential part of the COVID-19 response by major global and regional agencies such as AMCOW, UNICEF, SWA, and national governments. We also see that, one, civil society networks and citizen engagement, both of which IRC championed during the Watershed programme, are being included in COVID-19 responses, and, two, calls for research, for example by the Canadian Government, are emphasising the importance of including and leveraging local expertise to design public health responses.

While we are disappointed that COVID-19 has not led to a widespread increase in financing for WASH, we see the more widely recognised connect between health, WASH, and the environment as a promising step toward viewing WASH as part of a complex public health system. Advocacy to encourage the inclusion of WASH in wider conservation work inspired The Nature Conservancy to call for a consultant to assist them in bringing WASH into their Water Fund approach.

In 2020, life-cycle costing tools, developed by IRC over the past decade, were incorporated in the financial framework for the WASH Strategy of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ 50/30 Commitment. This is evidence of the adoption of IRC’s expertise on mobilising and leveraging blended finance for improving the sustainability of WASH development spending at scale.

Rural utilities, and other models of professionalising water and sanitation supplies, were significantly documented, analysed, and promoted during 2020. The idea of safely managed services being the goal for everyone—not just urban and wealthy populations—has gained momentum, as championed by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in its 2021-2025 Safe Water Strategy. The word ‘utilisation’ was introduced as a provocative way to talk about extending professional piped water services. The term gained prominence after its introduction during IRC’s All systems go! Symposium in The Hague, the Netherlands, in March 2019 and it has now become commonplace. Lessons learned from regional utility work in Ghana and Uganda, and experiences in scaling piped water systems in India, have been heralded as strong examples of progress.

Output in focus

Where piped services are still a long way off or not logistically feasible, self-supply has proven to be a safe and promising option. Over one billion people worldwide depend on this largely undocumented service delivery model. A new book published by IRC in collaboration with Sally Sutton is an important and practical new resource for reaching people vulnerable to being left behind. It is a useful how-to resource on supporting self-supply which is especially critical for dispersed settlements and households that are difficult to serve through other models.

Further, we produced a series of papers on our activities with the Safe Water Strategy (Conrad N. Hilton Foundation) in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger.

“The most influential actors have the capacity to strengthen national and local systems” - (Technical assistance).

While capacity gaps remain, many actors are acknowledging and actively seeking to fill gaps and learn new ways of working, many of which align with IRC’s systems approach.

A growing number of global actors are seeking out capacity support from IRC to strengthen local and national systems. In response, we offer advisory services on particular aspects of systems change including the building blocks of finance, advocacy and monitoring, especially with a view to support WASH systems analysis.

A total of 1000 staff days were dedicated to 37 consultancy assignments in 26 countries, as well as work at regional and global level. One of the highlights in 2020, was the renewal of our engagement with the WASH SDG consortium. This covers supporting the SDG Consortium with district level capacity building, monitoring and knowledge management and sustainability checks in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Uganda and Nepal as well facilitating the learning on that at the programmatic level.

Other examples of our work in 2020 are mid-term reviews and evaluations, including the Sehati programme in Indonesia, Water.org’s work on system strengthening, the sanitation programmes of the Global Sanitation Fund in Benin and Togo, and the Blue Deal and WaterWorX programmes and the completion of a TrackFin exercise in Mozambique. Studies were undertaken amongst others on the costs of investments in rural water and sanitation in Latin America, the role of public development banks in financing water-related investments, financial flows in the WASH sector in Burkina Faso and Mozambique, and the mutual accountability mechanisms under SWA.

IRC has also been asked to provide expert peer review of major systems strengthening programmes and analyses. These include: the midterm evaluation of Welthungerhilfe’s Sustainable Service Initiative (May 2020) and the end report of WaterAid’s SusWASH programme (May 2020). We were also asked to co-author the Agenda for Change Technical paper (Tillet et al, March 2020: Strengthening water, sanitation, and hygiene systems: concepts, examples and experiences).

We added new courses and users to scaling our WASH Systems Academy. In January 2021, the Academy had 2,370 registered users for its five courses, and 524 certificates were awarded. While reaching important audiences, we realise that our reach is strongly concentrated in other international NGOs. During the course of 2021, we will develop new partnerships and trial new formats of blended learning to reach in-country professionals and, in particular, government staff.

Output in focus

Agenda for Change Technical paper (Tillet et al, March 2020: Strengthening water, sanitation, and hygiene systems: concepts, examples and experiences.)

The WASH Systems Academy has launched two new courses in 2020. The course titled 'Social art for behaviour change: the basics' is the result of a collaboration with the One Drop Foundation, while the course titled 'Advocating for universal WASH services' helps build capacities around engaging in advocacy activities and creating advocacy strategies.

COVID-19 adaptation and final reflection

Facing COVID-19 meant supporting the wider organisation to work virtually. We had to switch our internal organisational learning event, the IRC-energy week, to online; take our WASH debates to virtual environments; and expand and improve internally-focused IRC Global Talks online. We even led virtual fieldwork.

We also established an internal Programme Adaptation Team to rapidly develop an internal strategy to help guide our programmes in modifying activities and new programming, such as on hand hygiene and health care facilities. Between March and May, the Programme Adaptation Team delivered two main outputs: a scenarios document that included advocacy messaging, and a work plan. Lessons were shared with our partners in various ways such as through Agenda for Change.

Coping with COVID-19 has again demonstrated the leadership and incredible capacity of Country Programmes to drive IRC's impact, and challenges to change the ways we provide global support.

5. Inputs

5.1. Staff and offices

IRC increased its presence to 10 countries. IRC already had its historic presence in The Hague, the Netherlands, and shared office space in Washington DC. IRC now has registered offices in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Ethiopia. Additionally, we have rented office space in India and Honduras, and are hosted by partners in Mali and Niger. In 2021 we intend to formally register our offices in Mali and Niger.

By the end of 2020, IRC employed 94 staff (an increase of 10 since 2019). Most of the staff are based in the countries where IRC works. This is critical to delivering the organisational mission of strengthening local and national country processes and systems. In total, 59 staff members were working in our country offices: 14 in Ethiopia; 15 in Ghana; 15 in Burkina Faso; 11 in Uganda; two in India; one in Bangladesh; and one in Honduras. The Netherlands office had 34 staff and one colleague is based in the United States. In 2020, IRC also hosted the Agenda for Change Secretariat (two staff), four staff for Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), the PTPS Coordinator in Honduras and the Resource Centre Network coordinator in Ghana. The global associate programme counted 27 associate members, giving IRC access to a wide network of top international experts. IRC also offered three internships to people who gained valuable international and multidisciplinary experience.

5.2. Organisational development

IRC strives to be a unified, decentralised organisation with up to 10 country offices, district programmes, strong brand values and motivated staff working efficiently and professionally to deliver measurable results. To be successful, the enabling work environment and operating practices for dealing with financial and human resources must be fit-for-purpose and directly supportive of IRC's mission and decentralised organisational structure.

Preparations were made during 2020 for the development, testing and implementation of a cloud-based Exact Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) system with modules for Finance, Project Management & Reporting, HR and customer relationships management. The introduction of the Exact ERP will ensure that all IRC offices work with the same accounting software, while resources management becomes integrated. The roll-out of the system to the country offices is expected in the summer of 2021.

In 2019 and 2020, we prioritised updating our internal policies. In 2020, we developed and implemented a policy on Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We also reviewed and updated our Code of Conduct; Disciplinary and Grievance procedure; Complaints procedure; Associate procedures; Performance review policy; and, our Career Development Procedure.

The HR Manuals for the IRC offices in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Uganda were finalised and implemented. The HR Manual for IRC Ghana is expected to be implemented in April 2021.

IRC introduced a Whistleblowing Policy in 2019, stipulating the role and responsibilities of the two Trust Persons at IRC. The Trust Persons will submit a report, based solely on any disclosures made, to the CEO concerning the activities during the calendar year. Additionally, the Trust Persons advise the CEO on the disclosures, the relevant decisions and the outcomes of any investigation into reported suspected wrongdoing.

No incidents were reported by the IRC Trust Persons during 2020.

5.3. Partners and funders

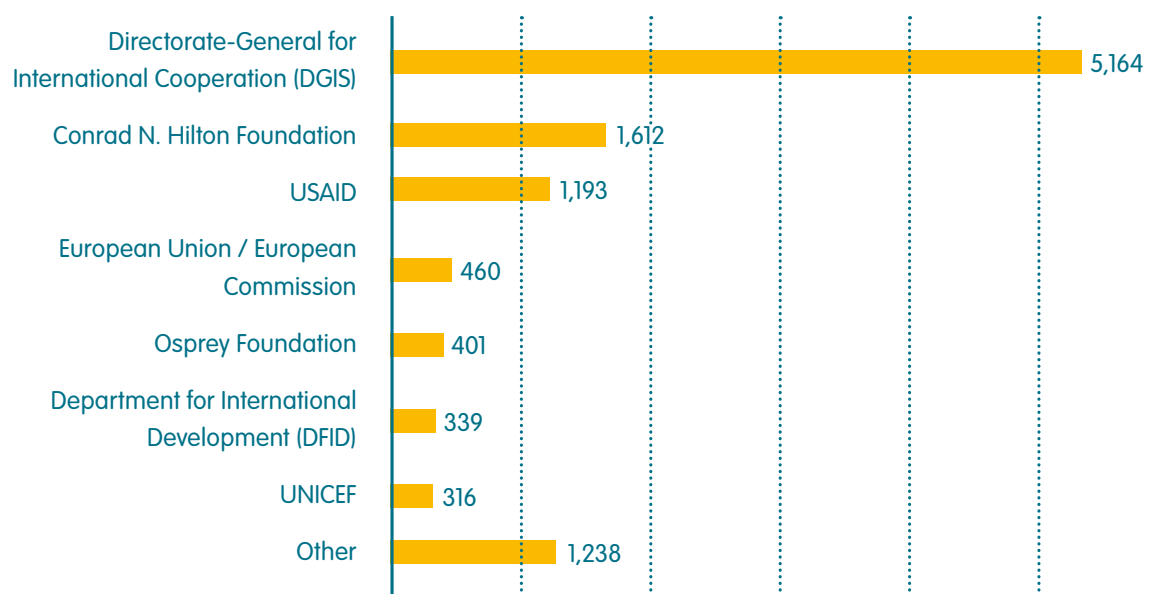
Contributing 48% of the total income during 2020, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained IRC's largest donor in 2020. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation was next at 15%. The portfolios of work funded by USAID, the European Union, UNICEF and DANIDA are also significant (20%), though they pose a challenge to IRC regarding indirect cost recovery as none permit the use of full cost tariffs. In all, 37 donors financed the 110 operational projects in 2020.

In 2020, IRC acquired € 5 million worth of new project work, less than a quarter of the acquisition target for the year. One-fifth of the acquired volume was directly related to COVID-19 related work.

The failure of IRC to win a second phase of our Watershed collaboration with DGIS was a major blow both financially (approximately 25% of turnover) and, more importantly, because of the gap it leaves in our civil society and advocacy work.

On a positive note, the Osprey Foundation renewed its commitment to IRC and a number of new donors and clients came on board. These included Unilever and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS).

OUR DONORS (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS OF EUROS)



The following donors and clients joined and supported IRC in 2020*: Agence Française de Développement (AFD) / Aguaconsult Ltd / Akvo / Aquaya Institute / Association Africaine de l'Eau (AfWA) / Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation / BRAC / Community Water & Sanitation Agency (CWSA) / Conrad N. Hilton Foundation / Conservation International / COWI / Cranfield University / Danish International Development Agency (Danida) / Department for International Development (DFID) / Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) / DT Global / Dutch Research Council (NWO) / Eau Vive / EAWAG Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology / European Union / European Commission / Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) / Gatsby Africa / Global Water 2020 / GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation Inc. / IKEA Foundation / IMC Worldwide / Institute for Water Education Delft (IHE) / Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) / International Cooperation Agency of the Association of the Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) / KfW Development Bank / LVIA Solidarity and International Cooperation / MACS Energy & Water / Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) / Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) / Netcentric Campaigns / Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) / Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) / New Venture Fund / Nuffic / Office National de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (ONEA) / OneDrop Foundation / Osprey Foundation / Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) / Oxford Policy Management (OPM) / Oxford University / People in Need / PNE Benin / Population Services International (PSI) / Pure Water Nature / Ramboll / Simavi / Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) / Splash / Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) / Svenska Postkodstiftelsen / TetraTech / The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) / Unilever / United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) / United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) / United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) / University of Reading / University of Wageningen / Vitens Evides International (VEI) / Viva Con Agua / WASHNote / Waterloo Foundation / Water.org / Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) / Welthungerhilfe / Woord & Daad / World Bank / World Health Organization (WHO) / World Vision

* This overview includes clients for whom IRC carried out consulting work.

5.4. Expenditure and financial balance

IRC ended 2020 with a total revenue of € 10,723,799 and an Annual Result of € 88,770. The income was some € 2 million below the Annual Plan, mainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued insecurity in the Sahel countries. Nevertheless, IRC was able to achieve a financial result in accordance to planning.

To achieve its mission and ambition, as well as maintain organisational flexibility, IRC works with partner organisations, associates, and consultants. Of the total gross revenue in 2020, 26% went to partner organisations and 12% to associates or consultants. An additional 13% was spent on other project costs including travel, meeting venues and equipment. In total, a little more than half of the gross revenue of € 10.72 million went to third parties. Compared to 2019, amounts spent on other project costs were reduced—a reduction directly caused by the global travel and meeting restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of the budget originally meant for international travel and meeting expenses was translated into time spending budgets during the year, following the implementation of alternative virtual meetings.

Half of the Annual Result has been allocated to the General Reserves, the other half to the Earmarked Reserves. The latter are earmarked for unplanned unemployment benefits, investments in IT and financial systems, as well as office upkeep. IRC's total General Reserves on 31 December 2020 were € 1,361,801, including € 114,413 in Earmarked Reserves.

Monitoring Report 2020 – Table DGIS expenses

Business unit/programme	Ambition 2020	Budget 2020	Expenses 2020	DGIS Programme (% of expenses)
Burkina Faso	€ 1,250,000	€ 2,578,190	€ 1,340,658	€ 99,987 (7%)
Ethiopia	€ 1,250,000	€ 1,381,391	€ 1,253,671	€ 76,494 (6%)
Ghana	€ 1,250,000	€ 1,000,260	€ 914,780	€ 86,425 (9%)
Uganda	€ 1,250,000	€ 1,111,710	€ 1,064,289	€ 76,022 (5%)
Total Country Programmes	€ 5,000,000	€ 6,071,550	€ 4,573,398	€ 338,928 (7%)
Bangladesh	€ 400,000	€ 458,672	€ 393,379	€ 29,104 (7%)
Benin	-	€ 28,750	€ 55,070	€ 8,106 (15%)
Honduras	€ 250,000	€ 119,937	€ 106,565	€ 70,154 (66%)
India	€ 500,000	€ 342,549	€ 311,902	€ 48,870 (16%)
Mali	€ 500,000	€ 442,880	€ 358,366	€ 30,670 (9%)
Niger	€ 500,000	€ 179,838	€ 135,409	€ 30,180 (22%)
New focus countries mgmt.	€ 100,000	€ 110,000	€ 89,605	€ 89,605 (100%)
Total new focus countries	€ 2,250,000	€ 1,682,626	€ 1,450,296	€ 306,689 (21%)
Global Hub (International)	€ 3,250,000	€ 2,964,065	€ 2,953,885	€ 583,222 (20%)
IRC Consult	€ 750,000	€ 716,804	€ 550,360	€ 47,332 (9%)
IRC US	€ 250,000	€ 391,950	€ 367,401	€ 27,496 (7%)
Management & Support (HQ)	€ 500,000	€ 852,656	€ 828,155	€ 307,809 (37%)
Total Netherlands cluster	€ 4,750,000	€ 4,925,475	€ 4,699,801	€ 965,859 (21%)
Total IRC	€ 12,000,000	€ 12,679,652	€ 10,723,799	€ 1,611,476 (15%)

6. Conclusions

In late 2016, IRC finalised its new Strategic Framework (2017-2030) to guide our contribution to achieving SDG 6: access to safe water and sanitation for everyone, everywhere, forever. At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to creating the strong national and local systems required to deliver safe and sustainable WASH services.

The Strategic Framework revolves around the partner districts in the countries where we work. These districts, their governments and their 2.78 million inhabitants are our core partners in working out how to do systems strengthening in practice. It is from our shared experience that we draw lessons to share and evidence to influence other actors at national and global levels. It is through this vertically integrated model for change, stretching from families and communities in districts to national and international decision makers, that we deliver impact. It is a model that mobilises multiple actors to be part of a movement for WASH systems.

Four years into that strategy we are seeing positive signs of change, especially at the district level. In our partner districts, the government led master plans and partnerships that support them, have led to at least 137,000 people with enhanced access to water services in IRC's six long-term partner districts, and over 108,000 with better sanitation. During the year, their ability to respond to COVID-19 tested and proved the strength of these partnerships. We are also seeing growing interest from other governmental and non-governmental actors to take up the district wide approach to systems strengthening, and to replicate master planning.

Globally, we are also seeing promising changes as the language and concepts of systems strengthening are ever more widely adopted. We are also seeing increased coherence in discussions around sector finance, aided by SWA's successful series of Finance Minister Meetings. That said, we also see how stubbornly resistant parts of the WASH system are to change: whether in the fragmented approach of external actors, or the lack of priority given to WASH by national governments. The sector remains underfunded and, in general, lacking in sufficient political prioritisation (albeit with exciting exceptions such as India's Jal Jeevan Mission and its target of universal tap provision by 2024).

This year, 2021, will be the last in our current five-year planning period (2017-2021). We are well on track to achieving or exceeding the targets we set for ourselves. In 2020, with our partners at Water For People, we developed a shared Strategic Framework for 2030 called Destination 2030 (D30) which sets our combined goals for global impact. We will use 2021 to create a set of new five-year strategic plans for each of our programmes which, taken together, will spell out IRC's contribution to the first five years of D30. We are excited at the opportunity to scale our work in our current six focus countries and partner districts and, with Water For People, to be part of a larger partnership covering 15 countries. Our joint goal is to ensure the delivery of safely managed services to 20 million people by 2030, while impacting delivery to at least 200 million people in the countries where we work, and the more than 2 billion people who continue to lack services globally.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: IRC Theory of Change Diagram (PDF)

Annex 2: Programme scoring and time series data 2017-2020 (PDF)

Annex 3: Outputs and Activities IRC 2020 (EXCEL)

Annex 4: 2020 Outcomes database (Outcome Harvesting results)

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make access to safe water and sanitation available for everyone, for good. The UN has set a target to achieve this by 2030 – known as ‘Sustainable Development Goal 6’ (SDG 6).

Resilient systems: the only way

We know that the only way to achieve this goal is through resilient local and national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems that transform lives. We know how to build and strengthen these systems – but we need to do it now.

It will take everyone, in all parts of the system, changing the way they think and work.

Everyone, together

Each part of a country’s WASH system must work effectively: from people using pumps, to monitoring tools, to finance systems. This can only be achieved if everyone in the system knows and plays their part.

Achieving universal access calls for collective action by a broad movement of government, civil society, private sector service providers, financiers, academia and others.

Our unique position

As a change hub, we’re in a unique position to unite people to drive and champion change from the ground up. We need to convince district, country and global decision makers of what it’ll take to achieve SDG 6.

Now is the time

We need to act now. We’re halfway through but not halfway there. We need everyone to commit to massive-scale change – and as you’re reading this, that also means you.