

Thematic area 5: System building in fragile contexts across the WASH, Humanitarian Development, and Peace triple nexus

Building strong and resilient WASH systems in fragile contexts is a theme that addresses the realm of a systems' building approach in areas, states or regions marked by fragility. In an ideal world, strong synergies would exist between service providers and institutions in charge of the WASH sector, and where local or regional government has a strong plan for providing and maintaining sanitation solutions and water access for all, over time; a system that can support a higher quality of life, education, and economic development. Some countries, however, are marked by varying forms of fragility that weaken those necessary synergies for users to receive reliable, safe, and lasting access to potable water and appropriate sanitation facilities; maintaining or triggering downward spirals of children being affected in their education, and communities losing economic capacity.

While fragility only increases complexity, efforts must be made to address the most difficult of contexts to achieve SDG6 and ensure that no one is left behind. Furthermore, steps can be taken to reduce the complexity to a more manageable level to ensure key actors are not frozen in confusion but are instead empowered to act.

Scope of the theme

While the key building blocks for WASH services have been clearly identified, a wide range of fragile contexts challenge the relevancy and adaptability of such models. Integrating resilience into WASH services is a precondition for achieving sustainable development in fragile contexts, which requires a more thorough understanding of the shocks and stresses that WASH systems are exposed to and the ability to build capacities to address them.

Overarching questions that will be addressed during the symposium are the following:

- What principles and learning from fragile states can inform and adapt the building block conceptual framework?
- How does fragility provide opportunities and barriers to systems strengthening?
- How do WASH systems concepts and approaches need to be adapted to integrate resilience (and peace) in fragile contexts?
- How could more 'conventional' WASH programming in fragile contexts be adapted to build strong and resilient systems?
- How can collaboration between various stakeholders (government, CSOs, private sector (utilities), humanitarian organisations and NGOs) be improved in the face of crisis?
- How to involve private sector actors in joint assessment and planning?
- Advocating for accountability for WASH in fragile contexts: how can accountability mechanisms be used to build trust and improve WASH service delivery?
- How should investments in fragile contexts be made differently to employ a WASH systems approach?

Objectives

Given the complex nature of fragility, the WASH systems approach is uniquely placed to address fragility and make practical recommendations on how to integrate resilience (and peace) into WASH programmes.

- **To advance** the WASH systems debate and thinking into the largely neglected area of fragile contexts
- **To reflect** on WASH systems approaches and sustainability in fragile contexts and resilience

- **To stimulate** others to further document and work on these issues
- **To contribute** to the Humanitarian / Development / Peace Nexus efforts to increase dialogue, understanding, and synergies 'between the H-D silos'
- **To provide** examples for organisations working in (and funding) fragile contexts, to highlight that system approaches are possible
- **To galvanise** political support, including at the national level, for action based on humanitarian principles, unhindered humanitarian access to those affected by crises and enhanced protection of civilians.