

Ex-post evaluation

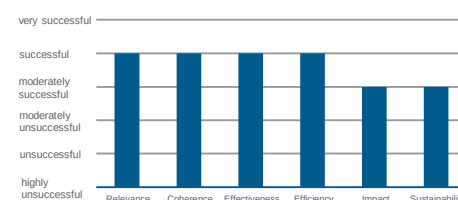
UNICEF Crisis Programme Water Phase V, Syria

Title	UNICEF Syria: Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V		
Sector and CRS code	Water, sanitation and waste management (1402000)		
Project number	2020 41 036		
Commissioned by	BMZ		
Recipient/Programme executing agency	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)		
Project volume/ Financing instrument	EUR 10.0 Mio. / Special Initiative for North Africa and the Middle East		
Project duration	12/2020 – 12/2022 (end of project)/April 2024 (final review)		
Year of report	2025	Year of random sample	2025

Objectives and project outline

The outcome-level objective underlying this EPE was to improve minimum drinking water and sanitation services for the population in selected locations throughout Syria by 2023. The impact-level objective underlying this EPE was to improve the living conditions of the Syrian population in the project areas in the medium term. Existing drinking water supply and wastewater disposal infrastructure was rehabilitated and its functionality improved through the procurement of equipment. The design was implemented with the necessary adjustments to budget lines.

Overall rating:
successful



Key findings

Despite difficult conditions, the project achieved positive results in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency. Positive results were also noted in terms of impact, although sustainability remains uncertain.

The project has been rated “successful” for the following reasons:

- In terms of intra-regional balance within Syria as a whole, the project was relevant by targeting the needs of the population in need.
- The coherent link between the project and previous and subsequent projects with UNICEF as the project executing agency made it possible to continuously integrate lessons learned into implementation.
- The intended objectives of the project were almost fully achieved with effective implementation.
- The production efficiency of the project from the perspective of the project executing agency and the allocation efficiency of the project from the perspective of the target group were assessed as successful.
- Overall development policy impacts were below expectations, but positive results were nevertheless achieved, also with regard to SDG 6 of the 2030 Agenda.
- The sustainability of the project was assessed as limited, as the impact of the changed socio-political and socio-economic context in Syria at the time of the evaluation poses a fundamental risk to the maintenance and operation of the infrastructure.
- As UNICEF has committed funding for follow-up projects in Syria to date, it can be assumed that WASH services will continue and that they will continue to have a positive impact.

Conclusions

- The UNICEF project proposal was adopted for the design of the project, with little consideration of sector-specific FC expertise.
- There were no plans for maintaining and financing the rehabilitated infrastructure after the project ended.
- The construction of new networks was not possible for political reasons, even though this would have been more cost-effective than rehabilitation measures.
- The time-consuming approval process of the BMZ/AA for selecting the intervention sites delayed the implementation of the project.
- UN organisations are critical to the success of effective and efficient implementation as project implementers in contexts with weak state structures.

Ex-post evaluation – assessment according to OECD DAC criteria

Preliminary remark: The ex-post evaluation of the FC project "Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, UNICEF Syria, Crisis Programme Water, Phase V" (BMZ No. 2020 41 036) began on 15 November 2024. Due to the security situation in Syria and local access restrictions, the EPE was conducted as a desk review. The planned deployment of a local technical expert on site was cancelled after the fall of the Assad regime in Syria on 10 December 2024 due to increased security concerns. Direct contact with representatives of the target group from the project period could not be established during the evaluation.

Overview of the rating per criterion:

Relevance	2
Coherence	2
Effectiveness	2
Efficiency	2
Overarching developmental impacts	3
Sustainability	3
Overall rating:	2

Abbreviations:

AA	German Federal Foreign Office
PCR	Project completion report/final inspection
GDP	Gross domestic product
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EPE	Ex-post evaluation
EUR	Euro
FC	Financial cooperation
FC E	FC Evaluation
HDI	Human Development Index
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
PA	Project appraisal
PAR	Project appraisal report
PYD	Democratic Unity Party
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SI MENA	Special Initiative for Stabilisation and Development in North Africa and the Middle East
SNA	Syrian National Army
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
TC	Technical cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YPG	Yekîneyên Parastina Gel
YPJ	Yekîneyên Parastina Jin

General conditions and classification of the project

The civil war in Syria, which broke out in spring 2011 following peaceful demonstrations for political and social reform and the subsequent repressive response by Bashar al-Assad's regime, has claimed more than 600,000 lives by June 2021, according to estimates by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).¹ At the end of 2023, UNHCR registered 6.4 million refugees from Syria and 7.2 million internally displaced persons.² Russia's military intervention in the Syrian conflict contributed to the consolidation of the Assad regime, which managed to regain control of more than 70% of the country. An autonomous region founded by Kurds in north-eastern Syria³ and the Idlib governorate in the north-west, which is partly controlled by the Islamist organisation Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), remain outside the control of the government in Damascus.⁴ Since 2016, Turkey has occupied a region north of Aleppo on the border with neighbouring Syria, where the Turkish military also exercises administrative control.⁵ The conflict between the Assad regime and the insurgent opposition and rebel groups has by no means been resolved, only frozen, especially as the interests of the intervening regional powers Russia, Iran and Turkey also stand in the way of a political solution.⁶ Although Syria's readmission to the Arab League in March 2023 strengthened the Assad regime's international position, the European Union (EU) extended sanctions against the Syrian regime and its supporters in May 2024 in view of the continuing policy of repression and human rights violations, albeit with extensive exceptions for humanitarian aid. Following the overthrow of the Assad regime in early December 2024 by HTS and other rebel groups, the country's future remains uncertain for the time being.

In 2023, Syria was classified as a "high alert" fragile state, alongside countries such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁷ The latest economic data available from 2023 also shows stagnating Syrian economic performance, the collapse of the national currency and a lack of financial resources for reconstruction. The country's real gross domestic product (GDP) has been stagnating or even shrinking for years, and there are no signs of a revival in overall economic output.⁸ Two-thirds of households in Syria were still unable to meet their basic needs in 2024,⁹ 12.9 million people have no secure access to food, and more than half of the population lacks a stable water supply.¹⁰ Rapidly rising food and fuel prices, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and the ongoing conflict in parts of the country, are having devastating consequences for Syria's most vulnerable populations, while fewer people are receiving subsidised food and fuel through national social security programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic, the cholera outbreak in 2022 and the severe earthquake in February 2023 have further exacerbated the social situation. Only with the help of the international community can basic social services be maintained.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 16.7 million people – more than two-thirds of Syria's population – were dependent on humanitarian aid in mid-2024.¹¹ The most important donors were the European Union and its member states.¹² Germany suspended bilateral development cooperation with Syria after the outbreak of the armed crisis but continued to provide non-governmental structural

¹ <https://www.syriahr.com/en/217360/> (accessed on 21 November 2024).

² UNHCR (2024): Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2023, Geneva, p. 18 and Strategic Steering Group (2024): Humanitarian Needs Overview Syrian Arab Republic, p. 9.

³ The Rojava region was administered by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), while military power in the autonomous areas was held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of the Kurdish militias YPG and YPJ. After the fall of the Assad regime, the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) attacked Kurdish territory, forcing 100,000 people to flee. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/syrien-kurden-tuerkei-rojava-sdf-erdogan-100.html#Milizen-staerke> (accessed: 13 January 2025).

⁴ In spring 2024, mass protests broke out against the increasingly dictatorial HTS, to which HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani responded with promises of reform and a general amnesty for certain prisoners, while at the same time intensifying the repressive measures of the security apparatus. <https://www.dw.com/de/kampf-f%C3%BCr-freiheit-aufstand-gegen-die-islamisten-in-idlib/a-69164626> (accessed on 25 November 2024).

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/de/news/2024/03/01/syrien-uebergriffe-und-straftlosigkeit-den-von-der-tuerkei-besetzten-gebieten> (accessed on 24 November 2024).

⁶ Jaeger, Kinan/Tophoven, Rolf (2023): The Syrian Conflict: International Actors, Interests, Conflicts, Politics and Contemporary History, vol. 63, 8, pp. 23-29. The US also maintains the AL-Tanf military base near the Syrian-Iraqi border, where fighters from the Free Syrian Army, the armed wing of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces formed in 2011, were temporarily trained.

⁷ Fund for Peace (2023): Fragile States Index. Annual Report 2023, Washington DC, p. 7.

⁸ For 2023, the World Bank estimated a decline in total economic output in Syria of 5.5%; World Bank (2024): Global Economic Prospects, January, Washington DC, p. 27. Due to the uncertain political situation in Syria, the International Monetary Fund has not published any macroeconomic data for the country since 2011; IMF (2024): World Economic Outlook, October, Washington DC, p. 88.

⁹ World Bank (2024): Syria Economic Monitor. Conflict, Crises, and the Collapse of Household Welfare, Washington DC, p. 24.

¹⁰ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/syria_en and <https://www.wfp.org/countries/syrian-arab-republic> (accessed on 21 November 2024).

¹¹ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/syria_en and <https://www.wfp.org/countries/syrian-arab-republic> (accessed on 21 November 2024).

¹² https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/syria_en#introduction (accessed on 21 November 2024).

support. There was no cooperation with the government in Damascus or with de facto authorities in north-western and north-eastern Syria.¹³ At the time of the evaluation, the expansion of Germany's development policy engagement in Syria after the fall of the Assad regime depends, among other things, on the willingness of the new government to include all population groups and civil society in the political process.¹⁴ Existing contacts with UN organisations (UNICEF, UNDP, UN-Habitat) and non-governmental organisations will continue to be used to support Syria in its peaceful transition to an inclusive political system that grants rights and participation to all groups.

Brief description of the project

The FC project "UNICEF Syria, Crisis Programme Water V" followed on from the four projects "UNICEF Syria, Crisis Programme Water I-IV". The project was funded by the MENA Special Initiative (SI MENA) and implemented between December 2020 and December 2022. Due to delays in the approval of the intervention sites by the Federal Foreign Office (AA)/ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the infrastructure work carried out by private construction companies commissioned by UNICEF could not be completed until December 2022, rather than by the end of June 2022 as planned. Existing drinking water supply and wastewater disposal infrastructure was rehabilitated, and its functionality improved through the procurement of equipment. The beneficiary and implementing agency of the project was UNICEF, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, which implemented WASH activities throughout Syria with the participation of other donors. The project followed the "Whole of Syria Approach", which provides humanitarian assistance in all parts of Syria. The aim of the project was to ensure that the Syrian population has access to clean and affordable drinking water as well as sanitation and hygiene services.

Breakdown of total costs

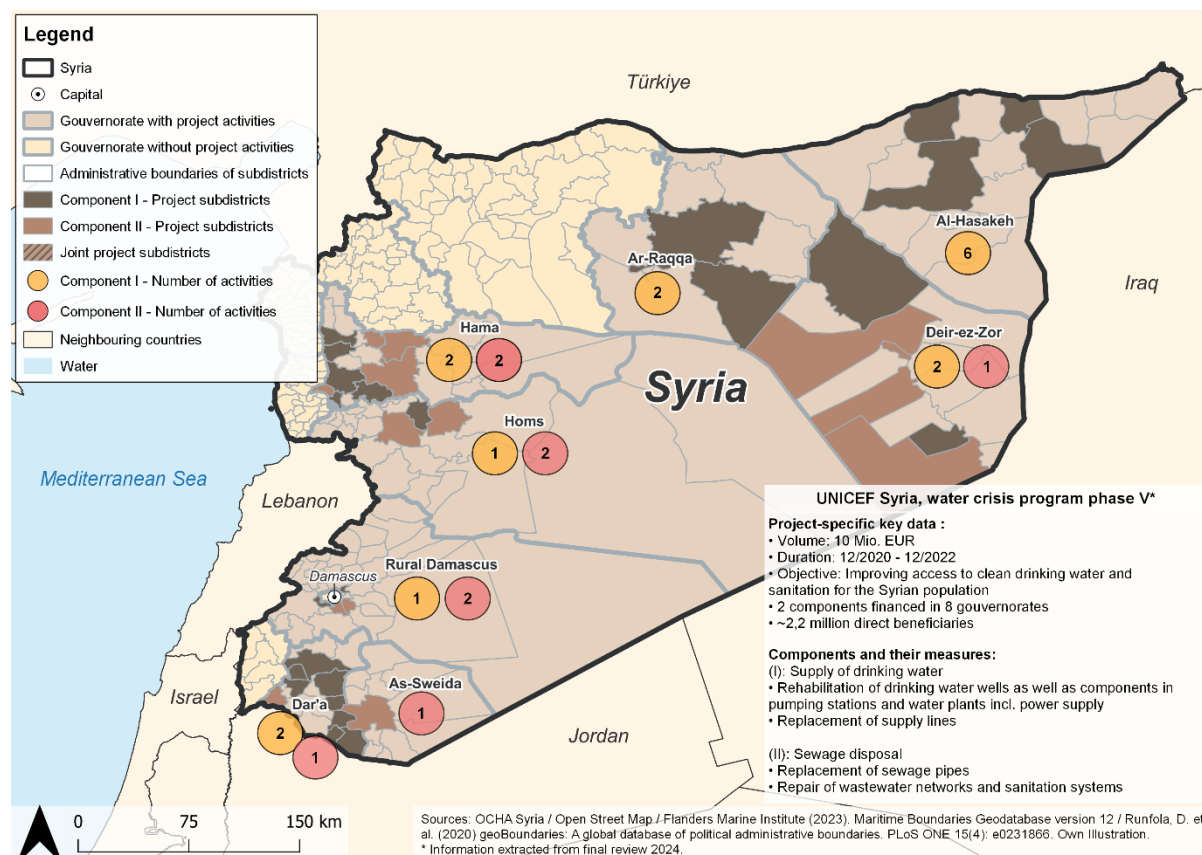
In EUR million	Inv. (plan)	Inv. (actual)
Investment costs* (total)	10.0	10.0
Own contribution	0.0	0.0
External financing	10.0	10.0
<i>of which BMZ funds</i>	<i>10.0</i>	<i>10.0</i>

* Total allocation to UNICEF from the Special Initiative for Stabilisation and Development in North Africa and the Middle East (SI MENA).

¹³ <https://www.bmz.de/de/laender/syrien> (accessed on 25 November 2024).

¹⁴ <https://www.bmz.de/de/laender/syrien> (accessed on 18 December 2024); <https://www.bmz.de/de/aktuelles/aktuelle-meldungen/schulze-gibt-unterstuetzungsmassnahmen-fuer-syrien-in-auftrag-240708> (accessed on 24 January 2025); <https://www.bmz.de/de/aktuelles/aktuelle-meldungen/entwicklungsministerin-schulze-in-damaskus-241542> (accessed on 27 January 2025)

Map of the project country incl. project areas



Rating according to OECD DAC criteria

Relevance

1. Alignment with policies and priorities

The project and its objective of providing the population throughout Syria with improved drinking water and sanitation services followed the "Whole of Syria" approach, which brought together humanitarian actors to increase the effectiveness of aid for the Syrian population throughout the country. Accordingly, the German Federal Government supported the work of the United Nations in all parts of Syria, which was aligned with the needs expressed in the Humanitarian Response Plans for Syria. These plans, coordinated by the United Nations, aimed, among other things, to increase access to basic services and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable population groups. In addition, the plans and their objectives also reflected the relevant quality characteristics of the BMZ, such as respect for human rights, anti-corruption and integrity, gender equality, poverty reduction and conflict sensitivity.

At the same time, the project's objectives took into account the complex political conditions in the country. For example, in order to minimise the risk of political influence by the government in Damascus on the selection of project locations in the area of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), a UNICEF prioritisation tool was used in advance of the selection process, which took into account numerous socio-economic criteria and, in particular, specific needs in the individual regions. Furthermore, unlike in previous phases of the project, it was intended to allocate up to 20% of the project's investment budget to measures in north-western Syria, which was controlled by forces opposed to the Assad regime. WASH measures were also planned in the areas controlled by Kurdish forces in north-eastern Syria. In all areas, local water authorities, where available, and relevant ministries were to be involved in the project.

The actual selection of project locations required the approval of the BMZ and the AA, which was only finalised during the implementation phase.¹⁵ In addition to a security situation assessed as stable by UNICEF, the decisive factor in the final selection was, above all, political safety, which included the protection of property rights of the local population and excluded areas controlled by EU-sanctioned terrorist groups or where the population had been forcibly displaced and prevented from returning.

2. Alignment with the needs and capacities of affected beneficiaries and stakeholders

In the year the project was conceived, according to the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 53% of the Syrian population was dependent on support in the WASH sector, with 28% of people considered to be in acute need.¹⁶ The situation was particularly precarious for internally displaced persons living in refugee camps and informal settlements, including women and girls, people with disabilities, older people and female-headed households. However, the population in host communities or municipalities with high numbers of returnees, no access to electricity, a dysfunctional waste collection system or a high dependence on informal water sources also suffered particularly from inadequate drinking water supply and sanitation.

From a regional perspective, it was evident that, in absolute terms, a particularly large number of people in north-western and eastern Syria were affected by inadequate basic WASH services (Figure 1); in addition, many districts in these regions also had particularly high levels of need in the WASH sector (Figure 2).¹⁷

¹⁵ Coordination with other donors was not necessary in this case, as UNICEF – unlike the evaluated projects, which are based on multi-year commitments and several phases – provided funds for humanitarian measures at short notice and for immediate implementation.

¹⁶ The figures are based on nationwide household surveys and surveys in refugee camps for internally displaced persons in north-western and north-eastern Syria; [2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic \(April 2020\) - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](https://response.reliefweb.int/whole-syria/wash) (accessed on 19 December 2024).

¹⁷ In addition to the Humanitarian Needs Overviews, the WASH Atlases also contain extensive data and analyses for the Syrian WASH sector; <https://response.reliefweb.int/whole-syria/wash> (accessed on 19 December 2024).

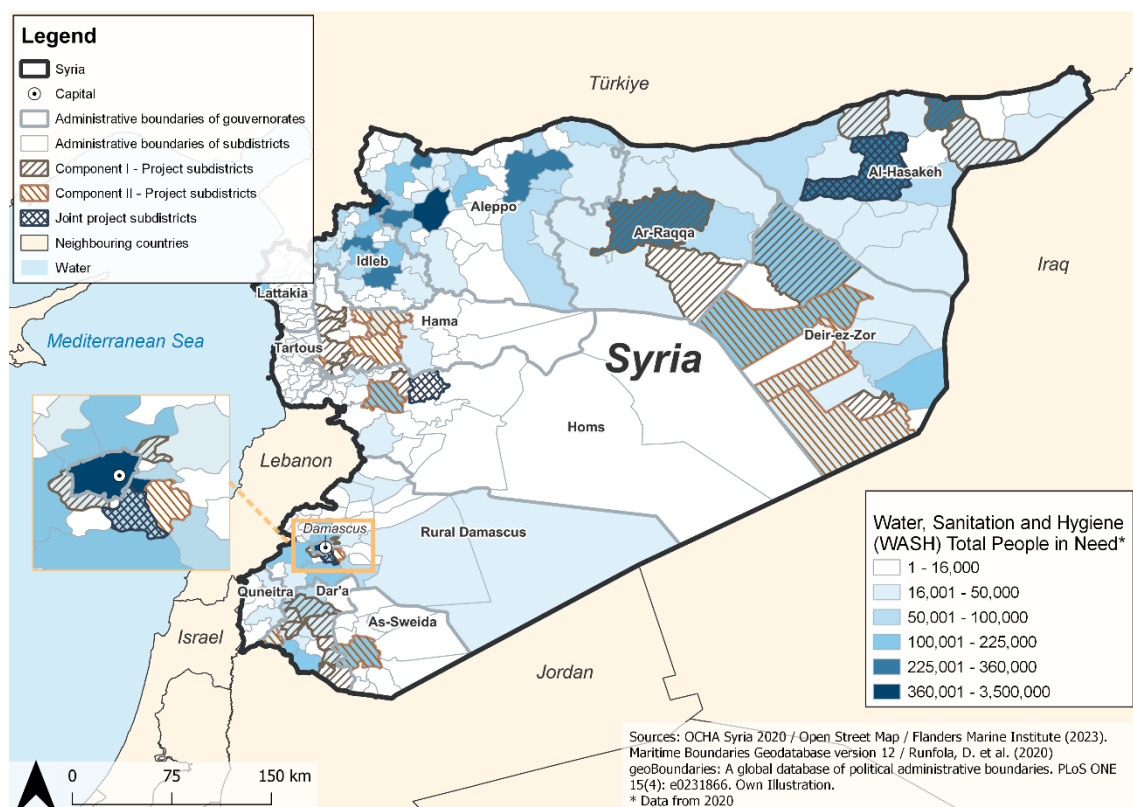


Figure1: Number of people in need in the WASH sector and planned project locations by subdistrict, 2020

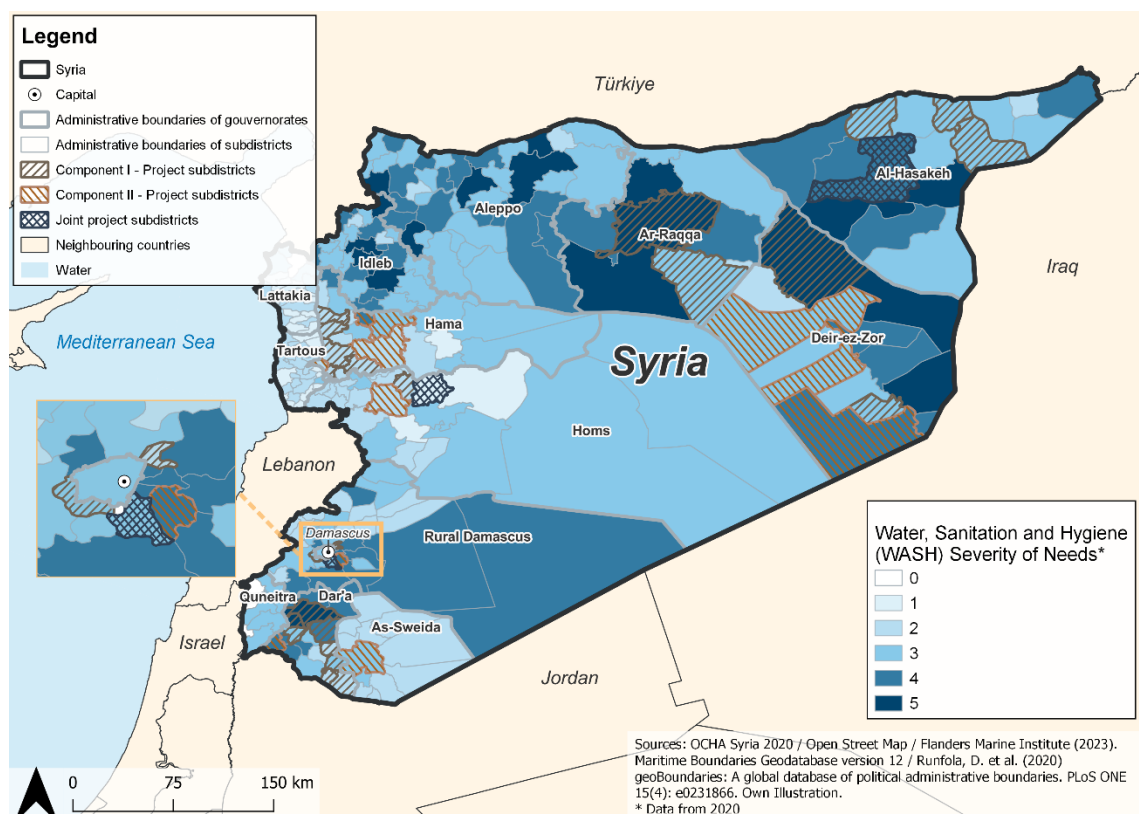


Figure 2: Severity of needs in the WASH sector and planned project locations by subdistrict, 2020

Figures 1 and 2 show that UNICEF's selection of project locations was not based solely on the coverage rate of the population in need and the degree of need. In addition to the prioritisation tool used by UNICEF, experience gained in previous phases of the project and conflict and needs analyses were also taken into account in the selection of project locations. The overarching goal was to achieve regional balance among the project locations in line with the Whole of Syria approach. Overall, the project was guided by do no harm principles, which in the WASH sector include understanding the conflict context, the interactions between WASH interventions and the conflict context, applying these findings in the design and implementation of measures, and reprogramming measures in response to changing conflict dynamics.¹⁸

In addition, the individual measures were to be planned and implemented in consultation with local authorities¹⁹ and the population, which should contribute to ensuring that the selection of locations and projects was as needs-based and equitable as possible. This also made it possible to take into account the specific needs of particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable sections of the target group that were not explicitly addressed in the project design itself, nor were the specific needs of girls and women.

3. Appropriateness of the design

In addition to the procurement of equipment, the planned measures included, in particular, the rehabilitation of existing supply infrastructure (wells, distribution networks, water treatment plants) and the rehabilitation of existing local sewage systems. In many respects, the design proved to be appropriate. For example, for organisational reasons, it was planned to contract non-governmental organisations working in project locations in north-western Syria, to which UNICEF staff did not have access, via the UNICEF office in Gaziantep, Turkey. OCHA criteria and an assessment by UNICEF were to ensure that the non-governmental organisations were sufficiently qualified. These organisations were in turn to commission local construction companies to carry out the repair work. The coordination and implementation of measures at sites in regime-controlled areas and in north-eastern Syria, on the other hand, was to be carried out by UNICEF's Syrian WASH team and additional external experts.

Decisive factors were also taken into account in the technical design, such as the lack of fuel to operate emergency generators and the lack of electricity, which was addressed, for example, by introducing solar panels. However, due to the extremely volatile political environment and the destructive civil war, the German side did not consider rebuilding drinking water and wastewater infrastructure instead of rehabilitating it, even though the desolate state of the water and wastewater infrastructure in some places would have required new construction, especially since the infrastructure was already considered in need of renovation before the war began.

With the rehabilitation of the existing WASH infrastructure, the outcome-level objective at the time of the project appraisal was that children and their families would have access to safe, affordable and sustainable water and sanitation services by 2023 and that hygiene practices at household, community and institutional levels would be adequate. At the impact level, the objective was to provide the Syrian population with universal and equitable access to clean and affordable drinking water and sanitation and hygiene services. Both the wording and the selection of indicators were based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 of the 2030 Agenda. In principle, the weighting of the indicators and their time frame can be considered appropriate, but it is disadvantageous that data was only available at an aggregated level. Given the limited possibilities for data collection at the governorate level as a result of the civil war and the general lack of availability of WASH data in a country affected by civil war, the decision to use SDG 6 of the 2030 Agenda as a basis, which also allows for international comparability, is understandable and should be considered appropriate.²⁰ For the same reasons, the selection of indicators is also considered appropriate, even though the indicators generally reflect the output level (see Effectiveness | Achievement of (intended) goals). In order to distinguish clearly between the outcome and impact levels, the target system in this EPE has been adapted to other projects in fragile contexts and is as follows: At the outcome level, the goal was to improve minimum access to drinking water and sanitation services for the population in selected locations throughout Syria by 2023. At the impact level, the objective was to improve the living conditions of the Syrian population in the project areas in the medium term.

¹⁸ More information on UNICEF's do no harm approach in the WASH sector can be found here: [WASH-for-Peace-Guidance-Toolkits.pdf](#) (accessed on 11 April 2025).

¹⁹ Due to political sensitivities, cooperation with local authorities was limited to what was absolutely necessary, but still took into account the importance of embedding the measures implemented in the national institutional structure.

²⁰ An overview of SDG 6, its targets and indicators can be found here: [Goal 6 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#) (accessed on 3 January 2025).

4. *Adaptability – response to change*

The design specifically addressed the impact of the civil war and the corresponding security situation, which sometimes meant that measures had to be adjusted during implementation. Three of the 33 planned individual measures were cancelled during the planning phase due to security concerns, and two further individual measures could not be implemented because the German authorities took too long to approve the locations. This challenge, which was already known from previous phases, meant that UNICEF had to resort to alternative funding for these measures in order to provide for the population in need. This led to adjustments to timetables and targets during implementation, which were also a consequence of curfews and other measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rating summary

The relevance of the project, which focuses on intraregional balance in the area of drinking water and sanitation, is assessed as successful overall, as its design was consistent with the policies and priorities of the United Nations and German development cooperation both at the time of the review and from today's perspective, and there was a fundamentally high level of need among the population in the WASH sector.

Relevance: 2

Coherence

5. *Internal coherence*

After the outbreak of the civil war, Germany supported the Syrian population through non-governmental projects in vital areas such as health, education, and water and sanitation. Technical cooperation projects were carried out in the health sector. FC projects in the areas of education and WASH were funded from transitional aid funds and from the Special Initiative for Stabilisation and Development in North Africa and the Middle East (SI MENA), based on multi-year commitments and several phases (see framework conditions and classification of the project).

The project evaluated here complemented BMZ's commitment to FC projects in Syria, some of which are still ongoing, in the area of employment promotion through the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and income-generating measures by UNDP, in the area of rehabilitation of basic urban infrastructure by UN Habitat, and in the area of education and child protection by UNICEF. In addition, the project evaluated here followed on from several projects funded by SI MENA and was the eighth phase of this funding overall.²¹ The measures were continued with projects funded from transition assistance funds, two phases of which were still being implemented at the time of the EPE.²²

The coherent link between the project and its predecessor and successor projects made it possible to continuously integrate lessons learned into implementation, for example with regard to ensuring the operation and maintenance of existing water and sanitation infrastructure. At the same time, the suspension of bilateral development cooperation as a result of massive violations by the Syrian government of international norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed limited the possibility of meaningfully interlinking German development cooperation instruments and exploiting synergies.

6. *External coherence*

The project was designed to use existing systems and structures of the UN International Children's Emergency Fund, which had sufficiently decentralised structures in the WASH sector to implement and monitor the measures

²¹ Previous projects were "UNICEF, Syria Crisis Programme Water I" (BMZ No. 2015 41 127), "UNICEF, Syria Crisis Programme Water II" (BMZ No. 2016 41 042), "UNICEF, Syria Crisis Programme Water III" (BMZ No. 2017 41 073) and "UNICEF, Syria Crisis Programme Water IV" (BMZ No. 2019 41 137).

²² These include "UNICEF Resilience building for the Syrian population through improved drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, Phase II (202218345) and Phase IV (202318400).

(see Relevance | Appropriateness of the design).²³ In addition, UNICEF and its implementation partners cooperated with local agencies and authorities at all locations to support their efforts to establish networked drinking water supply and sanitation systems and avoid relatively expensive water deliveries by truck.

While the measures financed by the project evaluated here focused on repair and rehabilitation work on the water and sanitation infrastructure, other donors, such as the United States of America, Canada, Japan, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland primarily provided funding for humanitarian aid measures in the WASH sector, such as water deliveries by truck, distribution of chlorine tablets and hygiene articles.

UNICEF coordinated short- and long-term measures through its country office in Damascus, also with a view to avoiding duplication of funding. In addition, UNICEF chaired the WASH sector working group as part of the Whole of Syria Approach, which provided the framework for the coordinated implementation of humanitarian measures and accountability for the United Nations and other humanitarian organisations.²⁴

Rating summary:

Given the circumstances, the project was consistent with other FC projects implemented on behalf of the BMZ at arm's length in Syria, as well as with other measures in the WASH sector, which were coordinated satisfactorily by UNICEF overall. For these reasons, we assess coherence as successful.

Coherence: 2

Effectiveness

7. Achievement of (intended) objectives

The objective adjusted as part of the EPE was to improve minimum drinking water and sanitation services for the population in selected locations throughout Syria by 2023. The target group was set at 2.3 million people in the project design, of whom 1.5 million were to receive drinking water supplies (component 1/K1) and 800,000 were to receive sanitation services (component 2/K2). While the target value was not achieved in K1, it was exceeded in K2.²⁵ The reason for falling short of the target in component 1 was the reduction in the planned individual measures (see Relevance | Response to changes / Adaptability). However, fluctuating population figures based on OCHA estimates also led to discrepancies between the target and actual values at the time of the final review in both components.

The achievement of the target at outcome level can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: Target achievement at outcome level

Indicator	Status at PP (2020)	Target value according to PP (2022)	Actual value at project end (2022)	EPE (2025)
(1) 1.5 million Syrians have access to clean drinking water (component 1).	0	1.5	1.296 (651,000 women and girls; 640,000 men and boys) Not achieved	According to UNICEF, most of the rehabilitated infrastructure was operational in February 2025. However, it is unclear how many Syrians have access to it.

²³ These structures included five decentralised UNICEF offices in Qamishli, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous and Damascus, whose staff were responsible for implementing and monitoring measures. UNICEF also deployed external experts and local partners in locations that were not accessible to UNICEF staff.

²⁴ In an evaluation of UNICEF's overall engagement in Syria, UNICEF's coordination performance in the WASH sector is rated as satisfactory; <https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?documentID=18406&fileID=47854>, p. 15. (Accessed: 27 January 2020)

²⁵ The indicators used at the outcome level are generally classified at the output level, but are considered appropriate in view of the challenges of data collection and the poor data situation, and in order to distinguish them from the impact level.

(2) 800,000 Syrians have improved access to sanitation (component 2).	0	800	908 (438,000 women and girls; 470,000 men and boys) Achieved	According to UNICEF, most of the rehabilitated infrastructure was operational in February 2025. However, it is unclear how many Syrians have access to it.
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Source: Final report UNICEF Syria, Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V, BMZ No. 2020 41 036, 18 April 2024; UNICEF Syria Country Office, Equitable WASH services for all: Breaking the vicious cycle of service degradation. WASH programme (Phase V), Final Report, May 2023.

8. Contribution to the achievement of the objectives

Despite the reduction in individual measures, all funds were spent in eight of the 14 governorates. The fact that more projects were implemented in K1 than in K2 is considered reasonable given the vital need for drinking water.

Table 2: Projects implemented and project locations by governorate*

Component 1: Drinking water	Component 2: Wastewater
Repair and renewal of parts of the water networks and water connections in rural Damascus	Rehabilitation of sewage networks in rural Damascus
Repair and operation of boreholes in the governorate of Dar'a	Rehabilitation of sewage networks in Atil in the governorate of As-Sweida
Supply of electric motors for submersible water pumps in the governorate of Daraa	Rehabilitation of parts of the sewerage network in rural Damascus
Renovation of water pumping stations and water pipes in the governorate of Deir Ez-Zor	Renovation of sewage systems in the governorate of Dar'a
Renovation of water pumping stations and water pipes in the governorate of Deir Ez-Zor	Renovation and renewal of sewage systems in the governorate of Deir Ez-Zor
Supply and installation of submersible pump systems and electrical transformers in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	Renovation of the sewage system in the governorate of Hama
Supply and installation of submersible pump systems and electrical transformers in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	Renovation of the sewage system in the governorate of Hama
Supply and installation of a power transformer in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	Renovation of the sewage network in the governorate of Homs
Supply and installation of a power transformer in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	Renovation of the sewage network in the governorate of Homs
Maintenance and renovation of the water network in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	
Maintenance and renovation of the water network in the Al Hasakeh Governorate	

Renovation of the Zour Shammar water station in the Raqqa Governorate	
Renewal of the water pipeline for the village of Al-Wadiyan in the Raqqa Governorate	
Replacement of asbestos pipes from the elevated tank in the Homs Governorate	
Rehabilitation of the drinking water system in the governorate of Hama	
Rehabilitation of drinking water sources in the governorate of Hama	

Source: Final report UNICEF Syria, Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V, BMZ No. 2020 41 036, 18 April 2024; UNICEF Syria Country Office, Equitable WASH services for all: Breaking the vicious cycle of service degradation. WASH programme (Phase V), Final Report, May 2023. *Services were provided in different municipalities, which is why some services are listed several times in one governorate.

According to UNICEF, the rehabilitated drinking water and wastewater infrastructure was largely operational at the time of the evaluation in February 2025, partly because employees of public water supply companies had taken part in training courses. According to UNICEF, restrictions in the operation of the rehabilitated drinking water infrastructure were a consequence of outdated and worn-out machinery and a lack of electricity, which could not be fully compensated for despite the introduction of solar panels as part of the project and its follow-up projects.

The proper functioning of the rehabilitated infrastructure was also confirmed in the final project review, which took place in April 2024 (see Efficiency | Production efficiency). The review also showed that, in terms of gender-specific use, slightly more women and girls benefited from the individual measures in K1, while slightly more men and boys benefited in K2.²⁶ Further data on socio-demographic characteristics that could provide information on the extent to which particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable population groups benefited was not collected due to the unstable security situation and the complex and dynamic environment. It is therefore not possible to determine with certainty ex post to what extent equal access was ensured for all population groups or whether individual population groups benefited more from the measures.

It is plausible that the measures made a fundamental contribution to achieving the objectives at the outcome level. Without funding for the above-mentioned services, which accounted for around one third of UNICEF Syria's total budget for WASH during the implementation period, it would not have been possible to provide minimum drinking water and sanitation services in many locations due to the desolate state of the WASH infrastructure, which affected almost 11 million people throughout Syria at the start of the project. (see Relevance | Alignment with the needs and capacities of stakeholders and affected persons).²⁷

9. Quality of implementation

UNICEF's leadership of the WASH sector working group and its local presence in Syria had a positive impact on the management and implementation of measures, as this ensured continuous exchange with WASH partners and external experts. Except in north-western Syria, the latter were deployed in locations that were difficult or impossible for UNICEF staff to access due to the registration and authorisation procedures applicable to them. In north-western Syria, as part of a cross-border approach from Turkey to Syria, non-governmental organisations that had already successfully implemented water and sanitation projects were entrusted with the implementation of the measures and monitoring (see Relevance | Appropriateness of the design).

This approach – the use of external experts and local partners – enabled UNICEF, as the project implementing organisation, to carry out WASH measures in line with the Whole of Syria Approach in locations that were difficult

²⁶ However, this distribution is due more to the population structure at the individual project locations than to measures specifically targeting women and girls, which were not planned as part of the project.

²⁷ [2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic \(April 2020\) - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](#) (accessed on 8 January 2024).

to access. In order to ensure a certain level of qualification among the implementation partners, UNICEF applied both generally accepted qualification criteria for humanitarian aid and its own criteria for their selection. There were no indications within the framework of the EPE that the qualifications of the implementation partners were insufficient to carry out the measures.

However, the quality of implementation was adversely affected by a lack of qualified local construction companies and skilled workers for the maintenance and operation of WASH infrastructure, particularly in the north-west of the country, as many skilled workers had been forced to flee due to the civil war. Massive cost increases for construction materials, transport and fuel also delayed implementation (see Efficiency | Production efficiency). In addition, the conditions prevailing during the catastrophic civil war did not allow the rehabilitation of infrastructure to focus on gender-responsive measures, even though consideration of gender-relevant risks was standard practice at UNICEF in all phases of the project cycle (see Overall development impacts | Contribution to overall (unintended) development policy changes).

10. Unintended effects (positive or negative)

The evaluation and final review of the project did not reveal any evidence of unintended effects, such as ethical or religious conflicts in connection with the funded services in the area of drinking water and sanitation. On the contrary, the response to the rehabilitation measures among the local population and internally displaced persons was very positive, as UNICEF staff and WASH experts noted during regular site visits. However, due to access restrictions and the unstable security situation, UNICEF was not able to monitor unintended positive or negative effects at all locations, and no on-site visits were possible during the evaluation. The extent to which unintended social, economic or environmental effects and the resulting potential or risks could not be identified cannot therefore be conclusively assessed within the scope of the evaluation.

Rating summary

As the intended objectives of the project were almost achieved, partly due to high-quality implementation, and the project's contribution to achieving the objectives is convincing, we rate the effectiveness as a result in line with expectations, with no significant shortcomings.

Effectiveness: 2

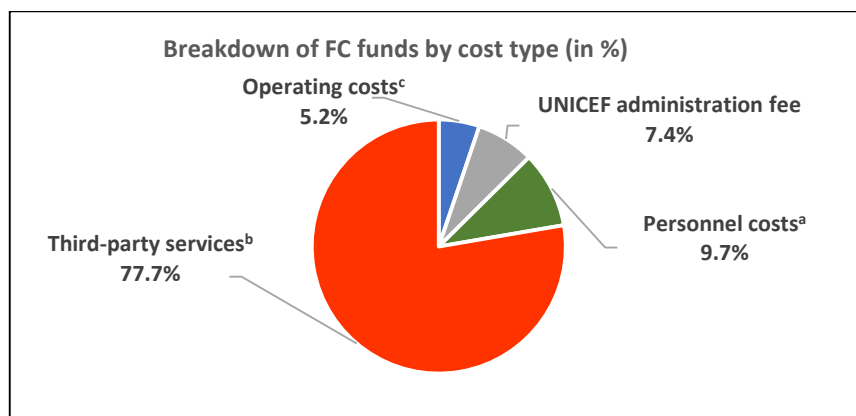
Efficiency

The assessment of efficiency takes into account that UNICEF, as the project executing agency, was not required to provide a detailed cost and performance account for the measures implemented. This was in line with standard procedure (single audit principle) for cooperation with UN organisations. The available cost statements do not indicate whether and to what extent UNICEF and/or the Syrian government made their own contributions to finance the project measures. At least for individual measures, UNICEF contributed partial funding from other donors, so that the FC funds earmarked for this purpose could be used elsewhere. Own contributions from Syrian government agencies included, for example, the provision of technical documents by the water authorities; in addition, technical staff from public water supply companies took part in needs-based training courses aimed at strengthening the targeted operation of these companies (see Effectiveness | Contribution to achieving the objectives). However, there is no quantifiable evidence of these government contributions.

The use of public financial resources was additional to the project, as private capital markets would not have financed the measures for the rehabilitation of water and wastewater networks in the intervention areas.

11. Production efficiency

The Final Certified Statement of Accounts prepared by UNICEF as at 31 December 2023 shows the following breakdown of the FC funds of EUR 9.999 million (USD 11.829 million) used for the project: USD 1.489 million (77.7%) was allocated to services provided by third parties on behalf of UNICEF for the rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure; personnel costs, including travel expenses, amounted to USD 1.149 million (9.7%); operating costs totalled USD 614 thousand (5.2%). UNICEF charged a flat administrative fee of USD 876 thousand (8.0% of project costs and 7.4% of total costs); this was in line with UNICEF's standard administrative costs for comparable FC projects and is considered appropriate given the difficult operating environment in Syria.



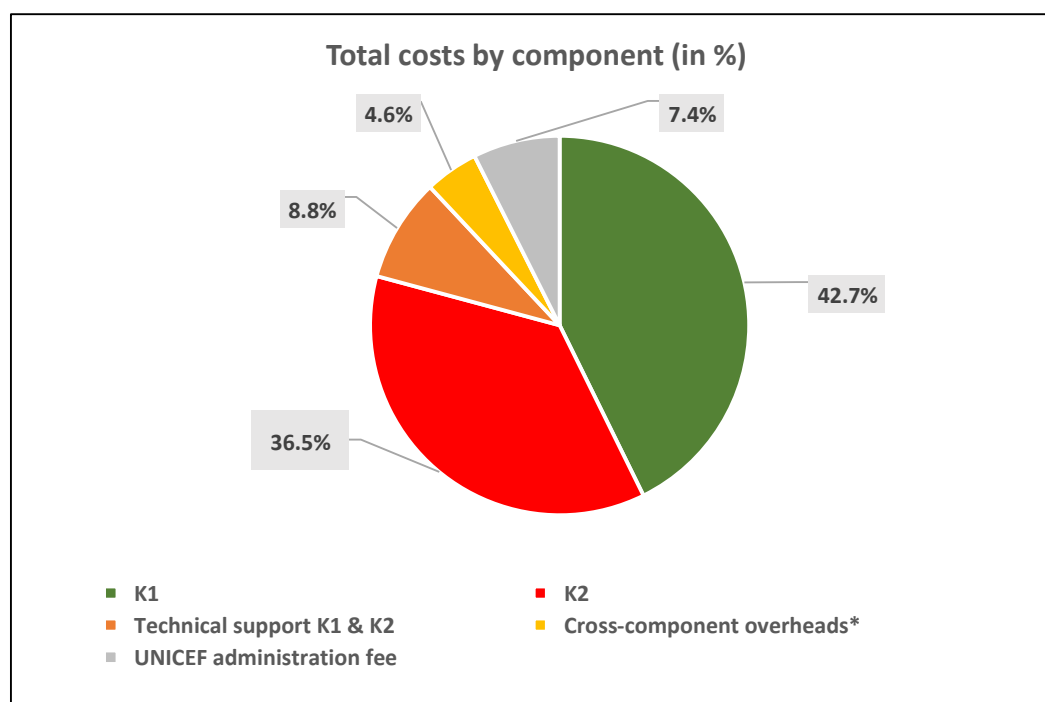
^a Including travel expenses.

^b Including transfers and grants to partners.

^c Including consumables and goods purchased.

Figure 3: Own illustration. Data source: UNICEF Final Certified Statement of Accounts as of 31 December 2023.

The outputs and activities planned in the project design were largely achieved in the components drinking water supply (K1) and sanitation (K2) (see Effectiveness | Achievement of intended objectives). K1 accounted for 42.7% of total costs, K2 for 36.5%; in addition, technical support expenditure in both components amounted to 8.8% of total costs. By allocating almost 90% of financial inputs to the rehabilitation of basic WASH infrastructure, the project contributed to structural development in a crisis context. With cross-component overheads accounting for only 4.6% of total costs, the project was implemented cost-effectively, considering the high level of effort required by the project management agency for monitoring, reporting and accountability for the many small-scale measures in 28 individual projects in intervention locations that were in some cases far apart.²⁸



* Cross-component implementation costs.

Figure 4: Own illustration. Data source: Final review (April 2024) "UNICEF Syria, Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V, BMZ No. 2020 41 036; UNICEF Final Report Budget 08.04.2024.

²⁸ For comparison: in the FC project "Strengthening basic social services for vulnerable children in host communities in Kassala and Gedaref, Sudan" (BMZ No. 2016 18 610), overhead costs amounted to 26%.

After the financing agreement was signed on 9 December 2020, the project was scheduled to run for 18 months until 30 June 2022. Due to the delayed start of implementation – caused by late approval of the intervention sites, the tense security situation and temporary access restrictions – a cost-neutral extension until 31 December 2022 was approved, meaning that the actual implementation phase lasted 25 months (see Relevance | Response to changes / adaptability). The final audit report was not submitted until April 2024, after KfW had visited several project sites. When assessing time efficiency, it should be noted that during the implementation period, the volatile security situation in several regions of Syria was at times the norm. In addition, the implementation of the measures within the originally planned timeframe was hampered by necessary reallocation of funds due to cost increases for construction materials, transport and fuel, shortages and high turnover rates of qualified skilled workers, delays in approvals by state authorities and the inadequate performance of the public water supply companies responsible for maintenance, repair, operation and expansion. Against this background, the time efficiency of the project is assessed as limited.

The cost-neutral adjustments to budget lines and the timetable requested by UNICEF were appropriate and understandable in the situation at the time. With regard to the use of funds, there are no significant shortcomings to be criticised in the project; the objectives were achieved economically.²⁹ Taking into account the extremely difficult conditions, the production efficiency of the project can be assessed as successful from today's perspective, as the results are free of significant shortcomings and in line with expectations.

12. Allocation efficiency

No explicit statements on the relationship between input and outcome in the FC project were made in the final review. Instead, statements on allocation efficiency were indirectly derived from the impact matrix in the present EPE by interpreting the number of beneficiaries as an indicator of outcome utilisation from the perspective of the target group and by assuming that the utilisation of outputs had positive effects for the target group (see Effectiveness and Overarching development policy impacts).

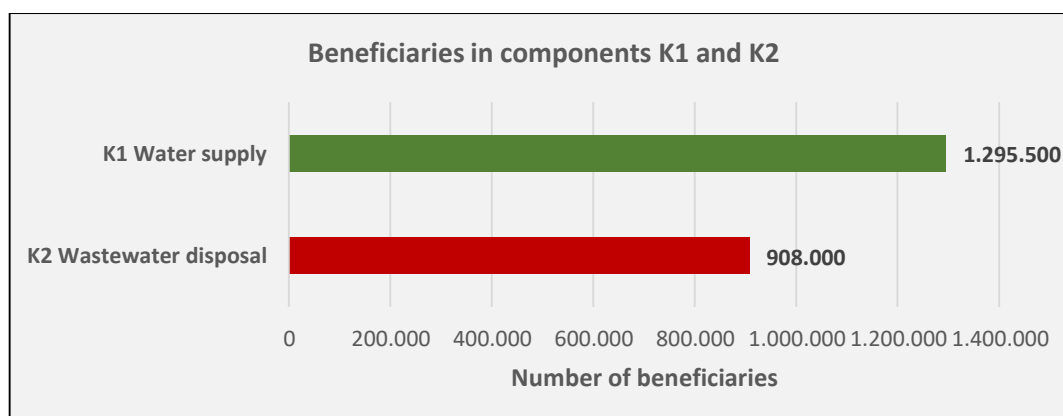


Figure 5: Own illustration. Data source: Final review 2024 "UNICEF Syria, Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V, BMZ No. 2020 41 036, Annex 2 Impact Matrix.

Output K1 was used by just under 1.3 million people; of these, 745.000 benefited from the rehabilitation of water networks, just under 367.000 from the repair of wells and pumping stations, and 184.000 from other improvements to the water infrastructure, such as the installation of electromechanical components and the replacement of water filters. Output K2 benefited 908.000 people, of whom 818.000 benefited from the repair or replacement of sewage networks and 90.000 from the rehabilitation of sanitation systems. However, it should be noted that the data on beneficiaries are based on estimates and include multiple entries where the same people benefited from measures in K1 and K2.

²⁹ This was also against the backdrop of corruption being perceived as endemic in Syria, with the country ranking among the lowest in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index, alongside Yemen and Somalia; Transparency International (2021): Corruption Perceptions Index 2020, Berlin, p. 3.

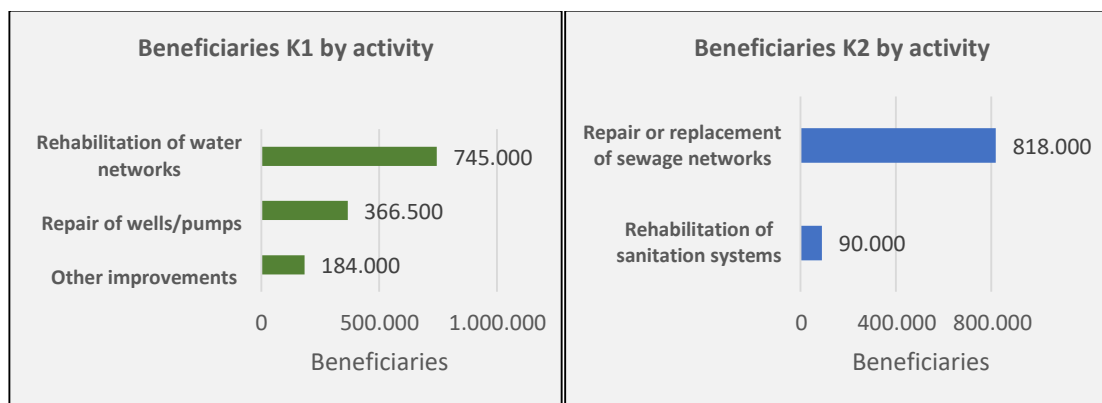


Figure 6: Own illustration. Data source: Final review 2024, UNICEF Syria, Improving the living conditions of refugees and host communities, Crisis Programme Water Phase V, BMZ No. 2020 41 036, para. 2; UNICEF Final Report 2023, Annex d, Water other (columns B, D, AH, AX) and Sanitation other (columns J, AE, AL).

In K1, the average direct costs per beneficiary were USD 18.40, but with significant differences between locations, ranging from USD 0.60 (repair of water networks in several municipalities in the Al-Hasakeh governorate) to USD 104 (installation of submersible pumps and electrical transformers in various municipalities in the Al-Hasakeh governorate).³⁰

The average direct costs were significantly lower at USD 7.51 per beneficiary in K2, ranging from USD 1.71 (repair of water network in Deir-Ez-Zor) to USD 15.00 (repair of water network in Dar'a Thakar).³¹ Overall, the per capita costs were in line with those of comparable FC projects implemented by UNICEF, for example in Ethiopia; where the establishment of water supply systems in refugee camps and host communities resulted in direct costs of USD 25.36 per beneficiary, or USD 5.88 per beneficiary for new and rehabilitated water supply systems.³²

* Rehabilitation of filters, installation of electromechanical components, maintenance of pipelines.

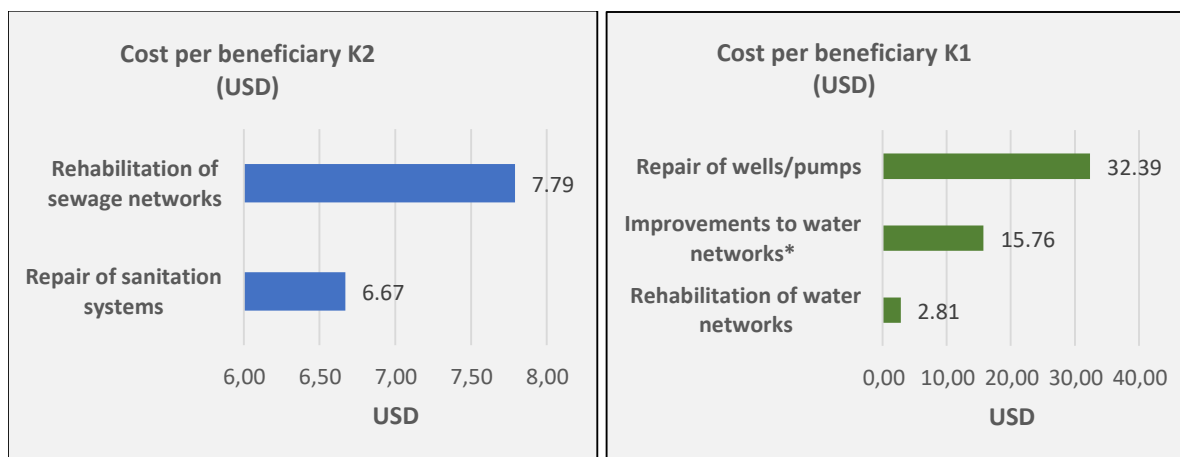


Figure 7: Own illustration. Data source: Annex 7, Tables e) and f).

Even though the average costs per beneficiary in the wastewater sector were significantly lower than in the drinking water sector, the higher allocation of funds to water measures was justified in terms of impact orientation; because access to clean drinking water was increased in quantifiable terms, while the impact of improved

³⁰ These were the municipalities of Al-Hasakeh and Quamishli (UNICEF project numbers 5.11 and 5.12) and Rihaniyet Shamr, Hajiyeh, Rehiyeh Madineh and Farouja Houshi (UNICEF project numbers 5.6, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10); Projects with particularly high specific costs were not considered in the selection of locations.

³¹ See Tables e) and f) in Annex 7.

³² See EPE "Improving water and sanitation in refugee camps and host communities in Gambella" (BMZ No. 2016 40 549), Annex 6, Table d; EPE "Support for malnourished and undernourished children and drought-affected population groups in Ethiopia" (BMZ No. 2015 69 144).

wastewater systems, e.g. on health and the environment, could only be measured to a limited extent using locally available methods.

As political requirements prevented the construction of new infrastructure, no assessment was made prior to the start of the project to determine whether the construction of new water and wastewater networks would have been more cost-effective than rehabilitating the existing ones (see Relevance | Appropriateness of the design). However, problems stood in the way of rebuilding the networks anyway, such as a lack of or insufficient data on local WASH infrastructure, difficulties in supplying and importing building materials, and a shortage of construction companies with sufficient technical and financial qualifications for all locations.

With the caveat that statements on the relationship between input and outcome could only be derived indirectly for the FC project, partly due to the limited informative value of the estimated data, the allocation efficiency is assessed as successful.

Rating summary

The assessment of efficiency takes into account the project-executing organisation's positive experience from comparable FC projects in Syria and other fragile contexts. In view of the difficult conditions under which UNICEF had to operate in Syria and the results that were in line with expectations, the production efficiency of the project is assessed as successful from the project-executing organisation's perspective. The allocation efficiency of the project is also assessed as successful from the perspective of the target group. Time efficiency is rated as limited success. Taking all evaluation dimensions into account, we rate the overall efficiency of the project as successful.

Efficiency: 2

Overarching development impacts

13. Overarching (intended) development changes

The impact-level objective adjusted under the EPE was to improve the living conditions of the Syrian population in the project areas in the medium term. To achieve this objective, it was necessary to increase the proportion of the population with access to basic drinking water and sanitation and to reduce water-borne diseases. The objective of increasing the proportion of the population with access to basic drinking water was not achieved by the end of the project, whereas between 2020 and 2022 there were slight increases in the proportion of the population with access to basic sanitation. No data is available for the period beyond this – and therefore also at the time of the evaluation. However, ongoing conflicts, a catastrophic supply situation, destroyed infrastructure, municipal services that are no longer fully functional and underfunding in the WASH sector make it unlikely that the situation has improved since 2022. This assessment was reinforced by questions posed to UNICEF WASH staff in Syria, who highlighted the deteriorating electricity supply in particular. However, events such as new cases of cholera in the Al Hol refugee camp in the Hasaka governorate in north-eastern Syria in October 2024 indicate that the situation in the WASH sector remains tense, even though cholera was successfully contained and reduced between the end of the project and the time of the evaluation. However, it must be borne in mind that these findings are based on aggregated data and general statements about the WASH sector and therefore do not allow causal conclusions to be drawn about the measures financed by the FC project in the project areas (attribution problem). The findings can therefore only provide approximate indications of the overarching development policy impacts of the project.

The achievement of the objective at the impact level can be summarised as follows:

Table: Target achievement at impact level:

Indicator	Status PP (2020)	Target value according to PP (2020)	Actual value at project end (2022)	EPE (2025)
(1) Percentage of the population with access to basic drinking water supplies.	94%	Increase	94% (2022) → Not achieved	In February 2025, UNICEF was unable to provide information on the extent to which the proportion of the population with access to basic drinking water supply had changed compared to 2022.
(2) Percentage of the population with access to basic sanitation.	94%	Increase	95% (2022) → Achieved	In February 2025, UNICEF was unable to provide any information on how the proportion of the population with access to basic sanitation had changed compared to 2022.
(3) Reduction in water-induced diseases such as cholera, etc.	0	0	217.512 cases (August 2022 to October 2023) → Not achieved	26 (October 2024) → Met since 2023

Source: <https://washdata.org/data/household#/>; <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/345271/WER9637-445-454-eng-fre.pdf>; [Whole of Syria Cholera Outbreak Situation Report no. 21 Issued 23 November 2023 - Syrian Arab Republic | ReliefWeb](#); <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-suspected-cholera-cases-al-hol-camp-and-north-east-syria-dg-echo-nes-health-working-group-echo-daily-flash-22-october-2024> (accessed on 20 January 2024).

14. Contribution to overarching (intended) development changes

Without the evaluated project and its predecessor and successor projects to rehabilitate the WASH infrastructure, the international community's support in the WASH sector would have been limited mainly to humanitarian aid measures (see Coherence | External coherence). Since humanitarian aid does not generally include the repair or renewal of infrastructure, it can be assumed that the living conditions of the Syrian population would have deteriorated further in the long term, with negative consequences especially for the health of the most vulnerable population groups, whose health status was already precarious. Additionality in terms of development policy can therefore be assumed. The project also contributed to structural development in the WASH sector because the rehabilitation and partial modernisation of the WASH infrastructure preserved drinking water and wastewater structures that can be built upon in the future. At the same time, this also made it possible to avoid cost-intensive humanitarian aid measures such as water deliveries by tanker trucks.

In terms of development policy changes, positive trends are evident in relevant targets in the WASH sector, such as SDG 6 "Clean water and sanitation" of the 2030 Agenda, although the target for 2030 cannot be achieved due to the destructive consequences of the civil war.³³ Years of underfunding in the WASH sector also had a negative impact on the achievement of the goals. However, this was offset by multi-phase FC project financing, UNICEF's extensive institutional expertise and long-standing experience in the WASH sector in crisis contexts, and the implementation of innovative solutions such as solar panels. This multi-phase overall concept helped to maintain the population's drinking water supply at a relatively constant level and to mitigate the negative health effects of inadequate water supply and sanitation, even though cholera outbreaks, for example, could not be completely prevented.

Due to a lack of direct contact with the project's target group, the evaluation cannot assess the extent to which the WASH rehabilitation measures have contributed to further intended development policy changes beyond

³³ <https://dashboards.sdqindex.org/profiles/syrian-arab-republic> (accessed on 23 January 2024)

these effects, such as strengthening social cohesion between the host population and internally displaced persons in Syrian municipalities.³⁴

15. Contribution to overarching (unintended) development changes

As at the outcome level, no evidence of unintended development policy changes (see Effectiveness | Unintended effects (positive or negative)) was found at the impact level, for example relating to gender inequalities. On the contrary, an evaluation of UNICEF's overall engagement in Syria confirms that gender-specific aspects of the crisis were adequately taken into account by UNICEF. There were also no indications that the "Whole of Syria Approach" had unintended negative effects at the higher level, which was also due to UNICEF's detailed knowledge and analysis of the conflict situation on the ground and the overall conflict context in the country.³⁵

Rating summary

We rate the overall development impact as below expectations due to the failure to meet targets. Nevertheless, development additionality can be assumed, and positive results can be identified, also with regard to SDG 6 of the 2030 Agenda.

Overall development impact: 3

Sustainability

16. Capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders

Under the conditions prevailing in Syria, the target group – internally displaced persons and the population of the host communities in the intervention areas – did not have the necessary capacities to ensure functioning water supply and sanitation services. The responsible state authorities also had difficulties in ensuring the operation and maintenance of the water and sanitation infrastructure; this remains the case in large parts of Syria even after the regime change.

17. Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities

The project strengthened UNICEF's capacities in Syria in the areas of project administration, monitoring and evaluation. Whether the positive effects achieved by the project can be sustained for the target group in subsequent phases depends on the target group remaining in the intervention areas and on further external financial support for the continuation of WASH activities. UNICEF's financial situation also remains highly dependent on contributions from the international donor community, which also has consequences for the sustainability of UNICEF's WASH services in Syria. Against this background, it was unrealistic to formulate a binding exit strategy for the FC project.

The FZ project enabled UNICEF to rehabilitate and partially modernise water and sanitation infrastructure and to finance temporary training measures to strengthen the operation of public water supply companies. Without external financial support, neither the internally displaced persons in the project locations nor the population in the host communities would have been able to implement and continue the measures; this also applied to the project executing agency. As far as possible under the conditions of civil war, the project's contribution to supporting sustainable capacities was successful, and the capacities created by the project were used on a lasting basis.

18. Durability of impacts over time

The 2020 financing proposal had requested that the project be implemented under an emergency procedure in order to contribute to effective medium-term measures to improve the desperate living conditions of large population groups in many parts of Syria. The final review noted direct positive effects of the measures on the current supply situation of the target group, but also a medium-term improvement in water supply and sanitation. At the time of the EPE, the security situation in large parts of the country remained volatile, far from the lasting stabilisation.

³⁴ The UNICEF final report of May 2023 also contains no information on the possible impact of the project on social cohesion.

³⁵ <https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?documentID=18406&fileID=47854> (accessed on 27 January 2024).

tion that is essential for the sustainable impact of the measures implemented under the project. The possible return of internally displaced persons to their homes after the fall of the Assad regime could result in the loss of knowledge among those who benefited from training measures in the project areas targeted by the project. This increases the risk of inadequate maintenance, while internal migration also increases the risk of overuse of WASH infrastructure, and their functionality will be impaired in the course of the reorganisation of state structures after the fall of the Assad regime, as well as by damage and theft. At the time of the final inspection, it had already proven difficult to ensure the operation and maintenance of the existing water and wastewater infrastructure, meaning that the sustainability of the project could not be fully guaranteed. According to the project executing agency, 11 of the 16 rehabilitated water supply networks were operational at the time of the EPE, and their technical and qualitative functionality was regularly checked; all rehabilitated wastewater systems were functional.³⁶ However, the water supply networks in some rural districts are at risk from armed clashes, vandalism and looting. Protection and maintenance of the facilities have been achieved in part through the commitment of local communities. After the HTS took power in December 2024, there was a significant decline in operating hours and maintenance services due to a lack of fuel allocations for the operation of service vehicles and the transport of technicians to infrastructure and facilities. In many Syrian regions, electricity is still only available for a few hours a day, causing pumps in water supply networks, which are only sporadically equipped with solar panels, to fail.³⁷

At the time of the evaluation, an evidence-based assessment of the project's sustainability was hampered primarily by uncertainty about further political and economic developments in the Syrian project locations. Despite the continuing high volatility in the Syrian intervention context, the predominant use and existence of the WASH infrastructure financed with FC funds was confirmed at the time of the project completion report (PCR). Although some results are below expectations, the overall picture is dominated by positive results. UNICEF has also already received funding commitments for follow-up projects in which measures will be continued in a conceptually adapted and geographically modified framework, so that the positive effects achieved with the measures of the evaluated project can be maintained, all other things being equal (connectivity).

Rating summary

At the time of the evaluation, the continued existence and use of the infrastructure could be confirmed, but the currently uncertain socio-economic and socio-political developments in Syria pose a fundamental risk to the maintenance and operation of the infrastructure. These aspects lead to a reduction in the sustainability rating, so that the durability of the effects over time is assessed as limited.

Sustainability: 3

Overall rating

Positive results in terms of relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness mean that the project is assessed as successful overall. The project design, which was aligned with the policies and priorities of the United Nations and German development cooperation, was convincing, as was the coherence with other FC projects and other measures in the WASH sector. In addition, the project took into account the fundamentally high level of need among the population in the WASH sector and made a demonstrable, albeit not comprehensive, contribution to achieving the objectives at the outcome level. In terms of implementation, the project was efficient from the perspective of both the project executing agency and the target group. However, the effects at the impact level were only limited, but do not outweigh the positive results in terms of relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness. With regard to the assessment of the project's sustainability, the fundamental question arises as to whether a limited sustainability claim would have been appropriate under the given conditions in Syria. However, such a limited claim was not documented in the project documents and is also not considered appropriate in retrospect, within the framework of the evaluation. The impact of the rehabilitation measures for critical WASH infrastructure was designed from the outset to be long-term, so that a standard evaluation criterion for development cooperation projects, which focuses on structural development, is appropriate for assessing sustainability. The project

³⁶ Written information from the project implementer dated 6 February 2025 and 12 February 2025. Due to power shortages caused by the bombing of electrical infrastructure, four water networks in Al-Hasakeh were only operational for one to two hours a day, and one network in Raqqa was out of service due to water pump failures.

³⁷ One reason for the frequent power outages is the restriction of electricity generation from oil after Iran stopped oil supplies to Syria following the fall of the Tehran-allied regime.

made a positive contribution to supporting sustainable capacities among the target group and project implementers, but the durability of the effects over time could only be assessed as limited at the time of the evaluation due to the continuing uncertainty about further political and economic developments in the Syrian project locations.

The overall assessment is therefore "successful". Taking into account the difficult implementation conditions of the project, positive results dominated in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, and the project also demonstrated limited development effectiveness, albeit with context-related risks to sustainability.

Contributions to the 2030 Agenda

The project contributed to the achievement of sustainable development goals, in particular SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation, but also SDG 3 – Good health and well-being, SDG 5 – Gender equality and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals.

Universal claim to validity, shared responsibility and accountability

The project was part of the SI MENA to stabilise and develop the region and create social and economic prospects for its people. The measures complemented FC projects in Syria with UNDP and UN-Habitat. UNICEF reported in accordance with the United Nations Single Audit Principle.

Interplay of economic, ecological and social development

The rehabilitation of drinking water and sanitation systems throughout Syria and the involvement of local companies promoted positive interactions between social, ecological and economic effects.

Inclusivity/leaving no one behind

The Whole of Syria Approach was an inclusive approach that implemented the principle of leaving no one behind. However, vulnerable groups were not explicitly addressed by the project.

Project-specific strengths/weaknesses and general conclusions/lessons learned

The project's particular strengths include:

- The project executing agency had cross-country experience in implementing WASH projects under conditions of crisis, war and displacement, and responded flexibly and appropriately, in consultation with the FC, to context-related adjustments to measures, budget lines and timelines.
- A significant proportion of the project's WASH measures were implemented by partners commissioned by UNICEF. This enabled the 'whole of Syria approach' to be implemented effectively.

The project's weaknesses include in particular:

- The project implementation schedule had to be extended due to delays in the approval of intervention sites by the BMZ and the AA.
- There was a lack of long-term concepts for the maintenance and financing of the rehabilitated sanitation infrastructure after completion of the rehabilitation measures, which had to be given priority over the construction of new infrastructure for political reasons.

Conclusions and lessons learned:

- The experience gained in cooperation with the project executing agency – including with regard to innovative elements such as solar panels – was taken into account in the design of other FC-funded projects in Syria in terms of the measures to be offered, locations, project duration and target group definition.
- Projects with many small-scale measures at many different intervention sites require a great deal of reporting effort on the part of the project executing agency. At the same time, a lack of data on impact indicators and a lack of data collection options mean that impacts cannot be attributed specifically to the FC-funded project.
- The evaluation did not find any evidence of conflicts between ethnic-religious population groups or between refugees and the local population as a result of the measures, which is also attributable to the do no harm approach implemented in the FC project.
- Structural rehabilitation or creation projects in fragile contexts require concepts for maintaining temporarily created structures in the long term, independently of external donor support.
- Where state structures are weak or bilateral cooperation is not possible, selecting a UN organisation such as UNICEF as the project implementing agency offers at least a limited guarantee of effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the planned measures.
- In projects in fragile contexts, complementary accompanying measures and follow-up projects can have a positive impact on the overall development policy effects and sustainability of the project.

Evaluation approach and methods

Methodology of the ex-post evaluation

The ex-post evaluation follows the methodology of a rapid appraisal, i.e. a data-based, qualitative contribution analysis, and represents an expert judgement. This involves attributing impacts to the project through plausibility considerations based on the careful analysis of documents, data, facts and impressions. Where possible, this also includes the use of digital data sources and modern techniques (e.g. satellite data, online surveys, geocoding). Causes of any contradictory information are investigated, attempts are made to eliminate them and the assessment is based on statements that are – if possible – confirmed by several sources of information (triangulation).

Documents:

KfW project documents, UNICEF reports, secondary specialist literature, analyses by the World Bank, IMF, UNDP and UNHCR, ex-post evaluations of comparable FC projects with UNICEF as project promoter.

Data sources and analysis tools:

UNHCR Refugee Data Finder; survey results from secondary sources; satellite images; Health Nutrition and Population Statistics; World Development Indicators, media reports, Online Map of Syrian Civil War (<https://syria.liveuamap.com>)

Interview partner:

KfW staff in the operational area, UNICEF staff.

The analysis of impacts is based on assumed impact relationships documented in the impact matrix developed during the project appraisal and updated during the ex-post evaluation, if necessary. The evaluation report presents arguments as to why which influencing factors were identified for the identified results and why the analysed project presumably made with contribution (contribution analysis). The context of the development project is taken into account with regard to its influence on the results. The conclusions are set in relation to the availability and quality of the data basis. An evaluation design is the reference framework for the evaluation.

For project evaluations, the method offers a - on average – balanced cost-benefit ratio, in which the knowledge gained and the evaluation effort are in equilibrium, and allows for a systematic assessment of the effectiveness of FC projects across all project evaluations. The individual ex-post evaluation can therefore not fulfil the requirements of a scientific assessment in the sense of a clear causal analysis.

The following aspects limited the evaluation:

Due to the security situation in Syria, UNICEF staff could not be contacted directly on site during the evaluation, but only digitally. It was also not possible to make direct contact with the implementation partners commissioned by UNICEF, many of whom provided WASH services for the project. Direct contact with the target group was also not possible due to the security situation and the massive internal migration of refugees in the intervention areas. Overall, the exchange of information was delayed. Due to limited data availability, statements could not be sufficiently substantiated empirically or could only be derived indirectly, for example with regard to efficiency and impact.

Methodology of the performance evaluation

A six-point scale is used to assess the programme according to the OECD DAC criteria. The scale values are as follows:

- Level 1** Very successful: results significantly above expectations
- Level 2** Successful: fully in line with expectations, without significant deficiencies
- Level 3** Moderately successful: below expectations, but positive results dominate
- Level 4** Moderately unsuccessful: is significantly below expectations and negative results dominate despite recognisable positive results
- Level 5** Unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
- Level 6** Highly unsuccessful: the project is useless, or the situation has worsened

The overall rating on the six-point scale is based on a project-specific weighting of the six individual criteria. Levels 1–3 of the overall rating indicate a “successful” project, while levels 4–6 indicate an “unsuccessful” project. It should be noted that a project can generally only be considered developmentally “successful” if the achievement of the project objectives (“effectiveness”) and the impact on the overall objective (“overarching development policy impacts”) as well as the sustainability are rated at least “Moderately successful” (rating 3).

The annex to this report is available upon request (German only).

Imprint

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