Linkages among WASH, Nutrition and Health Sectors in Guatemala

Health and WASH nexus

Child mortality

Guatemala evinces the same patterns of childhood mortality seen globally.

- 34% due to respiratory infections
- 18% due to diarrhea and enteritis

Incidence of diarrheal disease and respiratory infection by geographic area and socioeconomic group

Stunting rates by department among children 3-59 months; by area, quintile and wealth, 2008 and 2014

Chronic malnutrition

- Chronic malnourishment gaps closed between 2003 and 2014, but often due to a worsening situation for the children of the better off.
- The urban-rural gap closed due to an increase in malnutrition rates in urban areas, from 47% to percentage below 11.
- Women’s empowerment is linked to lower malnutrition rates, while childern of women with restricted decision-making ability had the highest rates of stunting.

Factors that affect malnutrition levels

- WASH (WATER Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene)
- Food security, dietary diversity and care
- Health-care

Although there is little progress, their impact on malnutrition and the extent to which they have changed over time, has not translated into better outcomes particularly

Special attention to WASH service quality

- Monitoring systems do exist but sometimes do not include rural areas.
- One factor that is of utmost importance to secure good-quality water is the development of monitoring capacity for existing distribution systems and sources of drinking water.

- The quality and sustainability of water and sanitation services is a problem in rural areas.
- The majority of locations in the country report discontinuity in services that places additional risks on public health and results in an inefficient use of infrastructure.

- Influences in the operation and maintenance of installations: This can mean affecting the quality of water in terms of hygiene, disinfection, and loss of water in the distribution system.

- The need of water and sanitation services in rural areas increases rapidly.
- The lack of water and sanitation services and rural areas increases the risks of children’s malnutrition.

- Productivity is also extremely affected.
- Due to time spent collecting water or from expensive sources such as private water vendors or other informal procedures.

- Accessing adequate water and sanitation services also reduces personal opportunities to economic, social and political dimensions of poverty.

Lessons & recommendations

- Optimizing water and sanitation investments and financing requires multi-sector approaches where the principal aim is to improve the quality of life of children.

- WASH becomes fundamental for reducing health and malnutrition risks implementing multi-sector projects can increase the overall economic impacts of these public investments.

- Multidimensional project designs that combine WASH, health and nutrition interventions become necessary, such as the recently-approved Crecer Sano Project that is redefining the way in which these complex issues are addressed.

- Guatemala needs to achieve an annual two percent in reduction in the rate of chronic malnutrition in children under five years old in order to reach 29 percent by 2021 (the value for 2014 was 45 percent).

- Inter-sectoral collaboration will be necessary to meet this commitment between Municipalities, Development Councils, Central and Local Governments and focusing on the areas of basic water supply and sanitation, maternal health, and children’s health interventions.

- Emphasizing children’s health and nutrition represents opportunities for the future.