

WATER SCARCITY IN EGYPT

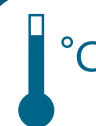
GROWING CONCERNS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

A 2021 UNICEF report shows that climate and environmental hazards have devastating **impacts on the well-being of children globally with 920 million children – over 1/3 of children globally!** – are currently highly exposed to water scarcity.

In #Egypt, the issue of water scarcity is taken very seriously as a major challenge now and for the years to come. Egypt is facing an annual water deficit of around seven billion cubic metres and the country could run out of water by 2025, when it is estimated that **1.8 billion people worldwide will live in absolute water scarcity** (source: *IPS*) and climate change is a key part of the problem.

Children are more vulnerable, and less able to withstand shocks such as droughts and heatwaves. They are also physiologically more vulnerable to toxic substances. Lead and other forms of pollution that can be found in untreated water affect children more than adults.



The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. It poses an unprecedented threat to the health, nutrition, education, development, survival, and future potential of all children.

(PART OF) THE SOLUTION

UNICEF has been working for years on WASH, particularly in #UpperEgypt to address water wasting and raise awareness on the issue of water scarcity. Improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) systems can play a role not only in saving water but also in reducing emissions: improving how we extract, use and manage water resources can reduce greenhouse gas emissions – which is essential for climate change mitigation and adaptation.



WATER

Orany is a father of 7 children in a small village in Minya. Like many of his neighbors he is working in the fields surrounding the village as a farmer, earning less than a couple of dollars per day. An income which is very irregular, and with which he needs to feed his children. Three years ago, Orany applied for a revolving fund loan supported by UNICEF to get access to treated tap water in his household. “Before that, I needed to go to my privileged neighbors and ask for water. Sometimes, they were refusing as they were claiming water prices were too high”.



Living with little or no water in the midst of a scorching hot summer can be a torture. Many poor families – no less than 10% in these villages – are connecting illegally to the water network. This very often leads to water leaks and waste as well as it puts pressure on the infrastructure.

In Egypt, the water company is in charge of the infrastructure bringing water in the streets. However, the water pipes bringing water to the houses should be paid by the families, who often cannot afford these costs. It is to cover these costs that UNICEF, in partnership with the Minya Water Company, set up (and funded!) a first-of-a-kind interest-free loan system in Egypt called «the revolving fund» to cover the \$130 to connect their houses to the infrastructure. Orany has to pay only \$2 a month to the water company which collects the money and «recycle» it to another loan for another family.



Not far from Orany's house, children are pumping water directly from the ground, with this homemade well. The untreated water represents a substantial health risk for the two children and their parents. The UNICEF revolving fund loan provided a connection to 3,000 households in the past 5 years. But there are many more waiting.

In cooperation with the national initiative “Hayah Karima” (Dignified life), UNICEF plans to implement the revolving fund concept in the 192 targeted villages in Minia. This would allow to accelerate the access of almost 45,000 families to household drinkable water and 225,000 sewage connections in these villages.

HYGIENE

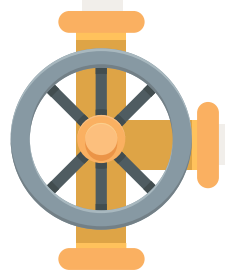


In Minya, many Primary Health Units (PHUs) have damaged, leaking bathrooms, rusty water pipes and an overall damaged water distribution infrastructure. As a result, not only the families visiting for health visits face hygiene issues but also the amount of water wasted is substantial. UNICEF started a programme with the Minya Water Company to refurbish the infrastructure and limit the wasting of the precious resource.

In one month, bathrooms and pipe systems in three out of 15 targeted PHUs were completely refurbished. These included both those serving the public and the ones in the dorms of healthcare professionals who can now spend their long shifts more conveniently. The rest of the PHUs are expected to be refurbished by the end of the year. In case of fund availability, UNICEF can scale this process up to other governorates than the current ones that include Minya, Fayoum and Asyut.



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THE ASK



UNICEF requests donors' support to extend the revolving fund scheme to additional villages to help more vulnerable families to have safe water connections at home and to be connected to the public sewage system.

Also, donors support would help in improving the WASH facilities in additional number of primary health units which facilitate the provision.