United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF)

Access to clean drinking water for children in the Horn of Africa

Research Report

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"let us sing songs of freedom together"

Forum: UNICEF

Issue: Access to clean drinking water for children in the Horn of Africa

Position: President, Deputy-President

Introduction

Since water is essential for life and the survival of humans, access to clean drinking water is an absolutely indispensable fundamental human right. However, there are regions on our planet, including the Horn of Africa, where existing supplies of drinkable water are inadequate and demands constantly increase. Therefore, more than 4.2 million children are deprived of meeting this basic need. And more than 1.8 million children are required to receive treatment for life threatening malnutrition. As far as aid is and can be maintained, the water deficits are increasing and there is not enough help to take care of everyone.

Therefore this research report delves into the critical issue of "UNICEF – Access to Clean Drinking Water for Children in the Horn of Africa", providing a detailed investigation and description of the complex challenges and implications associated with the issue, highlighting the imperative need for collaborative solutions and, finally, shedding light on the mandate to equitably safeguard the health and future of all children.

Definition of Key Terms

Water Scarcity
The situation of water scarcity occurs when the availability of freshwater cannot satisfy the needs of a population. Contributing factors to water scarcity include population growth, climate changes, and unsuccessful water management. Within the context of this report, water scarcity signifies the urgent challenge of inadequate access to clean and safe drinking water for children in the Horn of Africa.

Humanitarian Crisis
A humanitarian crisis indicates a dire situation for a significant population of people that threatens their well-being and security. These crises might be associated with adversities such as conflicts, natural disasters, or socio-economic inequalities. Especially in the Horn of Africa, the humanitarian crisis has arisen through the multifaceted interactions of environmental hardships, human battles, and water scarcity. The impact on children is disproportionate, endangering their health, nutritional status, and overall development.

Resilience
Resilience of communities and systems is the ability to sustain and recover from adversities. Within the context of the Horn of Africa, building resilience involves increasing the region's ability to adequately face water scarcity and conflicts, safeguarding the health and future of children despite the significant existing challenges.

Sustainable Development
Sustainable development is a strategy of progress that focuses on meeting current needs without compromising future ability to meet needs. Concerning water access for children in the Horn of Africa, sustainable development involves striking the balance between equitable utilization of resources and conservation of water to secure adequate supplies for future generations.

Gender Equity
Gender equity is defined by equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights regardless of gender. In the context of water access, gender equity involves providing safe water and sanitation facilities for children of both genders in the Horn of Africa.

Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities
Socio-economic vulnerabilities refer to the susceptibility of individuals or communities to economic crises, hardship, and social disparities. In the context of the Horn of Africa, socio-economic vulnerabilities increase the impact of water scarcity and conflicts with a disproportionate impact on the well-being of the population of children.

Waterborne Diseases
Waterborne diseases are illnesses caused when water sources are contaminated by pathogens and other contaminants. Children residing in regions with clean water scarcity are at increased risk of suffering from waterborne diseases including cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever.

General Overview

The Horn of Africa is home to nations including Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and parts of Kenya. The region struggles with a compound consisting of long standing battles, political instability, and socio-economic disparities. These adversities are further complicated by recurrent crises exacerbating the region's susceptibility. Examples of challenges faced by the local populations include terrorist attacks in Somalia and internecine conflicts in Ethiopia. In addition, recent climate changes have brought about long periods of drought and subsequent floods.

One of the main challenges in the Horn of Africa is water scarcity that affects children's lives disproportionately. Water scarcity means there is not enough clean water to drink, cook, bathe and clean. Apart from the disruption of daily life, this scarcity increases the risk of waterborne diseases, malnutrition, and other health problems among children. Children are particularly vulnerable to infections, given their immature immune systems and susceptibility to health problems. Girls, in particular, are often bearing the burden of collecting water for their families, which can result in missed educational opportunities and perpetuate cycles of poverty.

Children become malnourished and are deprived of essential nutrients for growth and development. Consumption and use of unsafe water contributes to disease transmission and exacerbates the crisis. At the same time, people are forced to migrate to survive; displaced populations are even more vulnerable. An immediate relief action plan with the provision of safe and clean drinking water, adequate nutrition, and health care is urgently needed to prevent disease, impairment, and death. However, enhancing community resilience is key to a successful and comprehensive response. Communities should be prepared to recover from future adversities such as water scarcity and conflicts as well as prioritize children's health.

The scarcity of water also exacerbates food insecurity and conflicts in the region. Droughts and water scarcity can lead to crop failure and livestock deaths, further straining the livelihoods of communities and increasing the risk of famine. Competition for limited water resources can escalate tensions among different groups, leading to conflicts that disrupt the lives of children and their families.

Looking to the future, the Horn of Africa's water crisis poses several significant risks. First, as climate change intensifies, rainfall patterns are likely to become even more erratic, exacerbating water scarcity. This will put additional pressure on children's health, nutrition, and overall well-being. Second, the potential for conflict over water resources may increase, destabilizing the region and displacing communities, further jeopardizing children's safety and access to education.

Addressing the Horn of Africa water crisis requires a multi-pronged approach that includes improving infrastructure, enhancing water management practices, and building resilience to climate change. International cooperation and assistance are crucial to provide relief to affected children and communities, reduce the risk of future crises, and secure a more stable and prosperous future for the region.

Major Parties Involved

UNICEF

UNICEF has been actively involved in providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to children and communities in the Horn of Africa. They work in collaboration with local governments and partner organizations to ensure that children have access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation facilities, and hygiene education.

By filling tanks up with water UNICEF could supply half a million people in a month. But still there are more people in need, whilst the water is too scarce in supply. They got 7.5 liters per day and to show some comparison one shower session costs about 25 liters and flushing a toilet about 10 liters. And because of this climate crisis, these inhabitants need to clean, bath, and stay nutritious with 7,5 liters a day.

Save the Children

Save the Children is another prominent NGO that operates in the Horn of Africa and focuses on improving the well-being of children. They have programs that address clean water access, sanitation, and hygiene education to ensure children in the region have access to safe drinking water.
They prioritized life savings, health and nutrition services, programs supporting livelihoods resilience, scale-up of unconditional cash transfers, water trucking and provision of nutritional supplies in drought-affected locations.

World Vision

World Vision is a humanitarian organization that operates in many countries, including those in the Horn of Africa. They work to provide access to clean water and improve sanitation facilities for children and communities in need. Their projects often involve drilling wells, building water infrastructure, and promoting good hygiene practices.

In July 2011, World Vision determined the need for a large-scale emergency response and entered global fundraising and alert mode, using all means, including the media, to warn of impending disaster if more action was not taken.
Since then, the organization has provided life-saving and early recovery services to more than 2 million people in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania. In addition to operating in established operational areas, World Vision is also responding to a number of new areas severely affected by drought, as well as the Dolo Ado refugee camp in Ethiopia and the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. They have provided water and sanitation, emergency food, shelter, livelihood and agricultural assistance, nutrition and health programmes, and done much to promote child protection.

Timeline of Events

1984 - 1985	Famine peak in Ethiopia resulting from drought and food shortages, impacting access to clean water.
Late 20th century	Civil conflicts causing displacements with disruptions to water infrastructure and access
Late 20th century	NGOs and international efforts taking initiatives
1999	Establishment Nile Basin Initiative to promote cooperation on water resource management
Early 21st century	Recurrency of droughts and crisis
2011	The Somalia Famine left millions of people, including children, in need of food, clean water, and humanitarian assistance.
2020	Water scarcity in Ethiopia; Humanitarian organizations raised concerns about the dire water and sanitation situation in conflict-affected areas.
2020 - 2021	Parts of the Horn of Africa experienced a devastating locust outbreak. Locust swarms damaged crops and vegetation, exacerbating food and water scarcity in the region.
2019 - present	COVID-19 pandemic measures to contain the virus, such as lockdowns and restrictions, disrupted supply chains and access to essential services. Maintaining access to clean water for hygiene purposes became even more critical during the pandemic to prevent the spread of the virus.
Current situation	Increasement of climate-related challenges affecting the water deficits.

Possible Solutions

Mobile Water Purification Units

Develop and deploy mobile water purification units that can be easily transported to remote and conflict-affected areas. These units should use advanced technologies such as solar-powered desalination or filtration systems capable of purifying water from various sources, including brackish water and contaminated wells. This would provide a flexible and rapid response to water emergencies and ensure a sustainable source of clean water for affected communities.

Water Distribution System

Implement a system to track and manage water distribution. Each water source, such as wells or purification plants, could be equipped with IoT (Internet of Things) sensors and linked to a distributed ledger technology (DLT) network. This would allow for transparent and accountable management of water resources, efficient allocation, and real-time monitoring of water quality. Users could access water through a secure digital platform, ensuring equitable distribution.

Rainwater Harvesting and Storage

Promote widespread adoption of rainwater harvesting and storage systems at the community and household levels. Innovative designs for rainwater harvesting infrastructure, such as affordable and easy-to-install collection systems, could be developed. Education and training programs could teach communities how to maximize rainwater capture and storage, reducing their reliance on scarce groundwater sources.

Water-Efficient Agriculture and Eco-friendly Farming

Encourage water-efficient agricultural practices that minimize water wastage and environmental degradation. Promote agroecological farming methods that enhance soil fertility and crop resilience while reducing the demand for water-intensive irrigation. Implement systems like permaculture and aquaponics, which integrate food production with water management and conservation, leading to more sustainable and resilient farming systems.

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