



# IRC

JUNE 2024

## Monitoring Report 2023

As submitted by IRC to the Directorate-General for International Cooperation of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Supporting water sanitation  
and hygiene services for life

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**Cover image:** Joana Agyeman sells Polo, fried coconut dough, at the Anglican School. She is part of the growing community of household connections made possible thanks to the Asutifi North ANAM partnership and the newly constructed Kenyasi I water facility.

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June 2024



## Abbreviations

<b>AMCOW</b>	African Ministers' Council on Water	<b>OFA</b>	One For All
<b>ANAM</b>	Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo	<b>ONEA</b>	National Office for Water and Sanitation (utility in Burkina Faso)
<b>ASWA</b>	Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All	<b>PARTOS</b>	Preferential application of ISO 9001
<b>AWMZ</b>	Albert Water Management Zone	<b>PSEA</b>	Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>BRAC</b>	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee	<b>PTPS</b>	Para Todos, Por Siempre
<b>CONIWAS</b>	Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation	<b>QIS</b>	Qualitative Information System
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>SEA</b>	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>CWIS</b>	City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation	<b>SMEA</b>	Service Municipal d'Eau et d'Assainissement/Municipal Water and Sanitation Service
<b>DGIS</b>	Directorate-General for International Cooperation	<b>SWA</b>	Sanitation and Water for All
<b>EKN</b>	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>FCFA</b>	CFA franc (French African Currency)	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse Gas	<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>GLAAS</b>	Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water	<b>UWEWK</b>	Uganda Water and Environment Week
<b>HCF</b>	Health Care Facilities	<b>WAI</b>	WASH Alliance International
<b>HR</b>	Human Resource	<b>WASAC</b>	Water and Sanitation Corporation (in Rwanda)
<b>HRBA</b>	human rights-based approach		
<b>IATI</b>	International Aid Transparency Initiative		
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Peoples		
<b>IGG</b>	Inclusive Green Growth Department (of DGIS)		
<b>IHE</b>	Institute for Water Education		
<b>ISO</b>	International Organisation for Standardization		
<b>IWRM</b>	Integrated Water Resource Management		
<b>JEDI</b>	Justive Equity Diversity and Inclusion		
<b>JMP</b>	Joint Monitoring Programme		
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator		
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning		
<b>MFI</b>	Microfinance Institutions		
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation		
<b>NILG</b>	National Institute of Local Government		

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## Executive summary

IRC's efforts in strengthening WASH systems in order to deliver safe, sustainable and affordable water, sanitation and hygiene services are driven by local and national systems leaders who influence decision-making at the highest levels. The snapshots of the context, progress, challenges, and key results from 2023 in IRC's focus countries and partner districts highlight how systemic change is being achieved at scale. Data on building blocks and service levels demonstrate the impact of IRC's initiatives, underscoring the importance of continuous adaptation and evidence-based strategies to address both global and local challenges in the WASH sector.

During 2023, the One For All (OFA) partnership consolidated at all levels. At global level, there was intense collaboration towards the All Systems Connect Symposium, and at organisational level, a consolidation and strengthening into our second year of our shared strategy and results framework, the [Destination 2030 Strategy](#), based on a shared Theory of Change took place. For IRC, the Destination 2030 Results Framework includes new innovations to our monitoring while also continuing with many of the methodologies developed under IRC's 2017-2021 Strategic Framework.

Systems strengthening is core to the Theory of Change that IRC has embraced since 2017. It recognises the complex environments in which change is needed for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Driven by five distinct approaches across our established eight building blocks, our monitoring process is starting to see a picture emerging. Districts are for example often leading the systems strengthening process, with across-the-board improvements in the last five years from 2.4 to 3.3 (19 percentage points)<sup>1</sup>. National level changes are slower from 2.7 to 3.0 (7 percentage points) due to the complexity of engaging more stakeholders and entrenched systems. Generally, we see strong legislation yet weak regulation at both national and district level. When comparing 2022 with 2023, we are encouraged to see most building blocks progressing, except we are noticing a stagnation in Finance building block, possibly reflecting global trends.




	National	District
<b>Average building block strength (out of 5)</b>	3.0	3.3
<b>2018-2023 average system strength growth (%)</b>	7%	19%
<b>Strongest National BB 2023</b>	Legislation	Legislation
<b>Weakest National BB 2023</b>	Regulation	Regulation

1. Using the Likert scale where 5 = 100%, a 10-percentage point increase equals a 0.5 increase on the Likert scale.

In 2023, IRC transferred its small-scale Honduras program to Water For People and added Tenkodogo as a new partner district in Burkina Faso, slightly reducing the total partner population from 2.2 million to 2.1 million. Bangladesh became a focus country in 2023, with a partner upazila area to be selected in 2024. This programme under partner BRAC, focuses on climate hotspots – showing the increasing importance and need of climate resilient WASH that is emerging throughout. This builds on the IWRM-WASH focus and the leaving no one behind focus of the past years. With the Connect programme, we are reaching out beyond the traditional sectors, including Health, Social Justice, and Climate.

Achieving SDG6 targets requires dramatic increases in service delivery, while also ensuring that those services are sustainable particularly in Africa. Global challenges, such as population growth and the financial crisis, are reflected in partner districts. For example, South Ari District in Ethiopia faces the challenge of increasing its population from 167,000 in 2017 to 243,000 by 2030, necessitating the maintenance and expansion of services. The finance building blocks are weakening at both national and district levels. Current service levels show significant gaps, especially in sanitation and hygiene, with health posts scoring particularly low due to stringent criteria for improved facilities. There is little evidence that Covid-19 has led to increase in hygiene either at health case centres or in household service levels.

The service levels are lower than reported in 2022 (54% for water, 36% for sanitation and 13% for hygiene), particularly for sanitation. The reason lies in more complete data, particular from the new areas, which have lower coverage. 2022 had information on 1.29 mln people, whereas during 2023 we filled the data gaps and can report on 2.0 mln people. Detailed analysis of areas where we have data from both years, show we have retained most of last year's values in those districts.

		People*	Schools***	Health posts***
 Drinking water	<b>51%</b> Water at least basic	<b>1,008,000</b> out of 2.0 mln	<b>461</b> out of 1,069	<b>111</b> out of 254
 Sanitation	<b>20%</b> Sanitation at least basic	<b>402,000</b> out of 2.0 mln	<b>513</b> out of 1,069	<b>19</b> out of 254
 Hygiene	<b>12%</b> Hygiene	<b>138,000</b> out of 1.2 mln**	<b>449</b> out of 1,069	<b>78</b> out of 254

\* excludes N'Goutjina (Mali) and Tenkodogo (Niger) as data has not yet been available

\*\* excludes N'Goutjina (Mali) and Tenkodogo (Niger) and Ghana due to insufficient hygiene data

\*\*\* excludes Ganjam (India) and Tenkodogo (Niger) due to insufficient data



Ghana's success with systems strengthening in Asutifi North led to expansion to three more partner districts in the Ahafo region. Concerning service levels, at the national level, the proportion of the population using at least basic services has increased from 85% to 88% (JMP 2023). 6% of the people still rely on unimproved and surface water sources. The proportion of the population using at least basic sanitation has risen from 23% to 29%, and there is also a marginal reduction in open defecation from 18% to 17%.

Despite security challenges in the Sahel region, IRC remained committed to providing technical support, focusing on knowledge management, capacity building, and advisory services. The establishment of a technical secretariat for humanitarian affairs in 2023 in Burkina Faso is a notable development. In Mali, monitoring data showed stable and expanded WASH services, particularly in schools and health centres, with our new partner district N'Gountjina slightly below national averages.

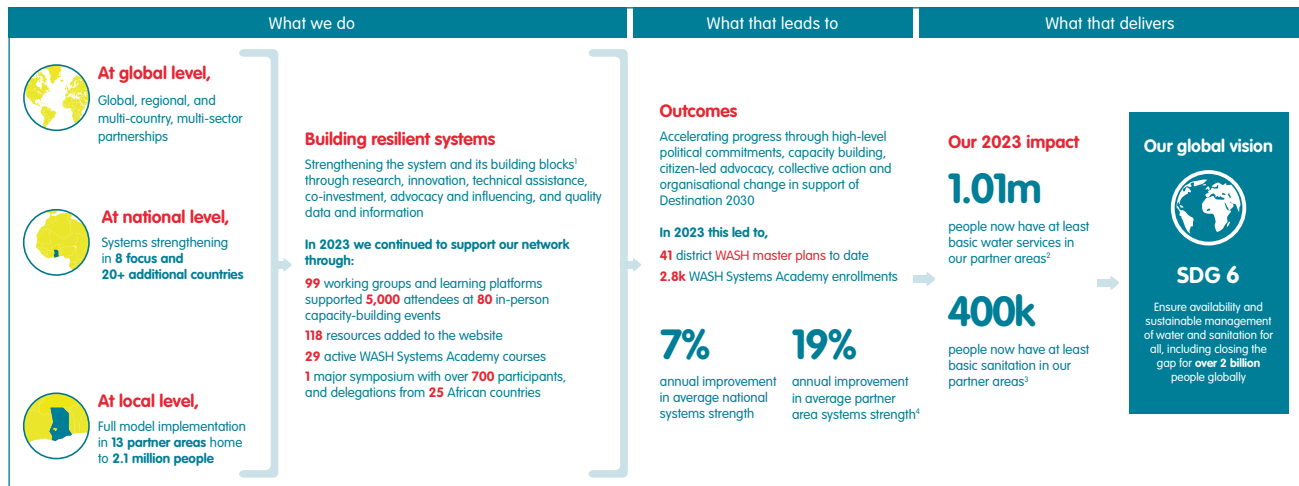
In Ethiopia, a significant milestone was achieved with the creation of a national WASH financing strategy. IRC intensified efforts in South Ari and Negelle Arsi districts, focusing on systems strengthening and resource mobilization. National sanitation and hygiene reporting improved, and a health transformation plan was finalized, enhancing planning and legislation.

In Uganda, working side-by-side in districts has allowed the OFA partnership to gain more influence at regional and national levels. Service level monitoring and data portals were established for informed decision-making. Collaborative efforts led to resource mobilization and adoption of new WASH approaches and technologies.

IRC expanded its influence in WASH and related sectors, contributing significantly to the UN 2023 Water Conference and hosting the All Systems Connect symposium. These events mobilized global efforts towards SDG 6 and promoted intersectoral collaboration. The WASH Systems Academy saw significant growth, reaching over 8,000 users globally and offering new training courses in partnership with various organizations.

While we can see clear progress in our systems strengthening, we must remain critical of the limited improvements we have seen in service levels. While Ghana is performing well at district and national level, most other countries and partner areas require still a significant shift in progress. This is not surprising, as we acknowledge the difficulty of achieving SDGs. With more complete picture on service level data than previous years, we see the challenge of working in new districts, which impacts any averages. However, setting aside the data challenges, low results in sanitation and hygiene continue to challenge us. Through Connect, we aim to drive better collaboration with health to contribute to improvements in 2024. With just half coverage on water in our partner districts, our Head of State Initiative pursues the case for significant shift in progress.

# 1. IRC at a glance



**The context of our work in 2023**

**124 people**  
in our flexible workforce.  
More on pg 36.

**110**  
Active programmes/  
projects in 24 countries

**€12.5**  
million spent from  
37 donors and  
47 clients

**Index**

- The largest part of our work happens in the following countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras\*, India, Mali, Niger, Rwanda and Uganda. Although we work in Bangladesh and India, we do not yet have IRC offices there.
- Through the One For All Alliance we contribute to impact in Bolivia, Central African Republic, Guatemala, Malawi, Peru and Tanzania, as well as other countries where the Alliance has joint presence - see map.
- Through projects, consultancy assignments and partnerships, we also worked in Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe amongst others.

\* By mid-2023 IRC concluded its activities in Honduras, shifting focus from direct involvement to supporting broader initiatives through our One For All alliance partner, Water For People. One For All will continue to work towards the Destination 2030 outcome targets for the country. 2023 marked a successful year for IRC in Honduras. The Vice Minister for Finance attended our All Systems Connect International Symposium and the government finalised its national finance strategy, ensuring sustained impact in WASH.

1. [Understanding the WASH System and Its Building Blocks, 2018, Huston A. and Moriarty P.](#)
2. Based on data from our partner areas in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, India and Uganda of a total population of 2.0m
3. See 2 above.
4. At IRC, we capture systems strengthening by measuring progress on building blocks rated 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Since 2018, average national system strength has gone up from 2.7 to 3.0 and partner area system strength from 2.3 to 3.3

## 2. Our approach to monitoring

### 2.1 An introduction

IRC is dedicated to achieving SDG 6 – Ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all. We focus on targets 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 (safe water, sanitation and wastewater) knowing that these and other SDG targets are interconnected. The SDGs aim to prioritise the most underserved people whilst improving the level of services offered to those who already have basic services.

The year 2023 was the second year of IRC's [Destination 2030 \(D30\) Strategy](#), our shared strategy with the One For All Alliance. During this year it has been shaping our national and global work. The onboarding of the third partner (Water for Good), showed the strength of having a combined framework, to which their work could be added. Together with our partners we are putting clearer quality assurances, standardisation, and procedures in place. This has enhanced the data resolution from the 2022 Snapshot to a much more nuanced picture for 2023.

At the same time as we begin to work within the new OFA framework, we have continued many of the strategic processes initiated in 2017 with tools and methods that allow us to track change over a longer period of time. This report presents an overview of the results framework and the key results from 2023 for IRC. It is supplemented by the separate One For All Alliance Annual Report 2023 presents an overview of shared results from across the Alliance.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of our results framework and monitoring methodology under the D30 strategy. Chapter 3 gives an overview of progress against these results for each programme in 2023. Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the results achieved with contributions from DGIS funding. Chapter 5 gives an overview of our business performance metrics in 2023, with a focus on the inputs and resources that made programme delivery possible.

This report is also publicly available in the International Aid Transparency Initiative ([IATI](#)), where the financial flows of the DGIS programme funds are reported.

### 2.2 D30 Theory of Change

Our work is based on the D30 Theory of Change (Figure 1). The Theory of Change is rooted in our understanding of water, sanitation, and hygiene systems and how they can be strengthened and changed to improve service delivery. Lasting change in such complex systems is always the result of a combination of activities. Often, many small changes in the actors and factors within the system (at local, national, or regional/global levels) give rise to eventual major shifts.

From left to right, the Theory of Change shows: 1) the levels at which we work; 2) our approaches and systems strengthening efforts; 3) the resulting outcomes ; and 4) the higher-level outcomes and broader impact on systems strength and service delivery across key levels.

The D30 Theory of Change primarily focuses on three levels of action. The local level refers to the level at which responsibility for delegated public service delivery lies, and the country level reflects nation states (national governments) which are ultimately responsible for delivering human rights and citizen services. The global level reflects everything beyond a country, including regional, continental, or global systems which have major effects on what happens within a country. These levels are purely illustrative as not all our work fits neatly into these boxes.

These three levels illustrate our primary engagements, but we are also active at other levels to target leverage points for change wherever they exist, such as at sub-national or provincial level. Our regional level work, focusing on, for example advocacy to the African Union, has continued to grow in recent years.

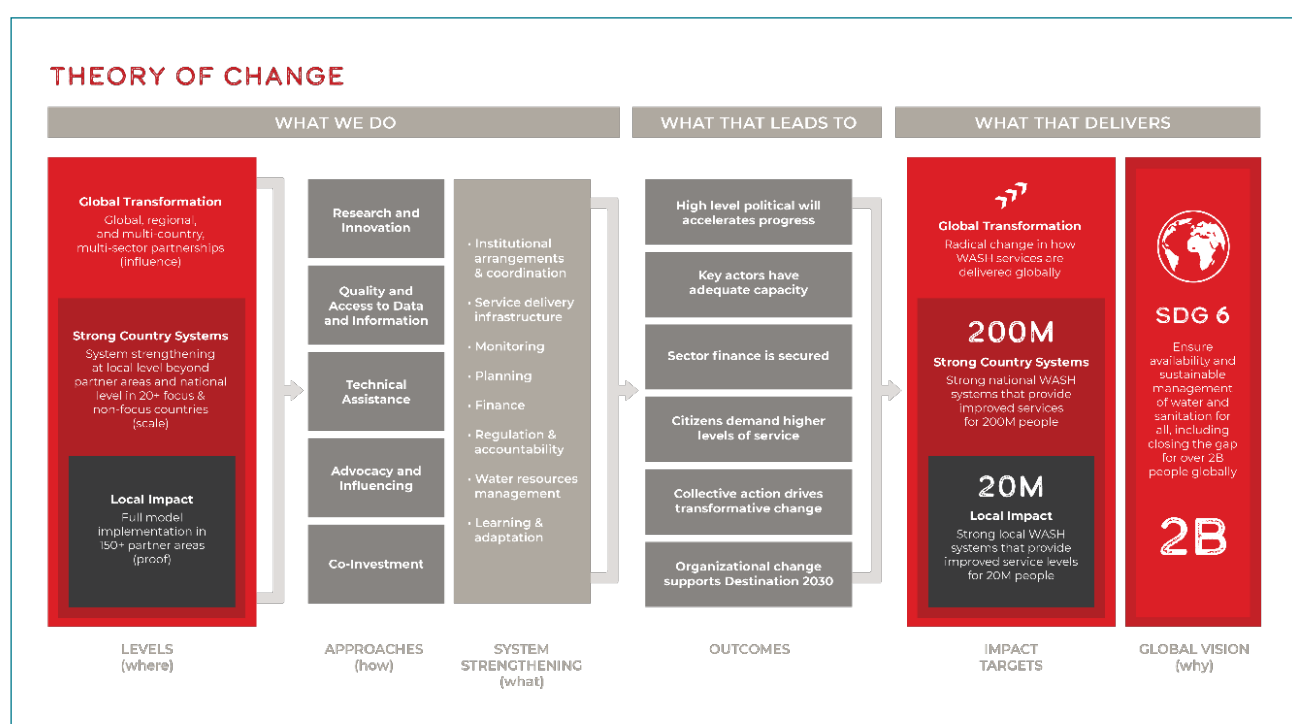


Figure 1: The Destination 2030 Theory of Change, described in the D30 Strategy

### 2.3 The Destination 2030 Results Framework

The D30 Results Framework is a mutual accountability and adaptive management tool that allows One For All members to track progress towards impact targets and anticipated results of the Theory of Change.

It includes indicators such as inputs/activities, outputs, and outcomes, and focuses on outcomes and impacts. Inputs serve as our resource contributions and form the foundation of our operational ability. Activities are what we do, and outputs are the direct products of these activities. Outcomes are the results of an output or several outputs—these are changes in behaviour, policy, or context that are beyond our direct control but within our sphere of influence. Impacts are defined as the long-term outcomes of our work—the change we wish to see in water, sanitation, and hygiene services for the populations we serve.

The Results Framework supports One For All members to be consistent in measuring information, hence making reporting and synthesis possible at the global level. It is designed to be flexible and to enable different countries and member organisations to retain their context-specific and organisation-specific metrics.

For IRC, the Destination 2030 Results Framework includes new innovations to our monitoring while also continuing with many of the methodologies developed under IRC's 2017-2021 Strategic Framework. IRC adopts the monitoring principles of the Sanitation and Water for All partners and the Agenda for Change Alliance (Figure 2).

### OUR PRINCIPLES FOR MONITORING

These reflect our commitments as members of the Agenda for Change and Sanitation and Water for All.

- Embrace systems thinking and complexity-awareness—value metrics that assess contributions and shared results.
- Use locally relevant metrics when possible; leverage Alliance investments in monitoring to strengthen permanent country systems.
- Use UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) definitions for SDG 6 service levels as the common denominator that enables synthesis and consolidation from different countries.
- Support Alliance members to align but appreciate and allow institutional differences.
- Be as flexible as possible while providing guidance on best practices and promoting efficiency.
- Clearly state the minimum requirements for the use of the results framework and support organisations to meet them.
- Promote transparency and ensure appropriate quality data through peer review and methodological guidance.

Figure 2: The Collaborative Behaviours developed by Sanitation and Water for All and adopted by the Agenda for Change partners.

Our priority is to ensure that the monitoring we do aligns with government priorities and that the resulting insights or data are shared with governments and communities. Prioritising country alignment means that data from different countries or local areas may not always be fully aligned or directly comparable between countries. We allow an acceptable margin of error in our consolidated data to prioritise collaboration and support to key stakeholders in each context. We report our methods transparently and strive to reduce the margins of error over time as available data sets become stronger.

Given that sector strengthening requires collective action by multiple WASH actors, much of our impact will involve contributing to shared outcomes. In terms of measuring the overall impact of our work, contribution is more important to us than attribution. Our approach suggests that, to drive change in a complex system, the actors involved (including ourselves) must hold each other mutually accountable for achieving results that are beyond the control of any single actor.

We continue to learn about the challenges of sharing a results and monitoring framework among separate organisations. Towards the end of 2023, the second-year monitoring against the Destination 2030 strategy, the OFA Strategic Accountability Team initiated a review of the monitoring framework to create a leaner version for 2024.



We also acknowledge **that true systems change takes time**. Though it may take several years for the definitive outcomes of a set of activities to become clear, we will be looking where the needle starts to shift. Facilitating systems change involves ‘driving using the rear-view mirror’ as much as it requires a forward-looking vision. The Theory of Change is both an anchor and a means to describe and systematically question our implementation model.

## 2.4 Programme-level reporting

During May 2023, the OneIRC network process and its charter were launched. They are based on principles of subsidiarity - which means to us that we enable decision-making power at the most societally legitimate levels (country, region and global) for achieving our mission. This principle has been increasingly applied to planning, reporting, and monitoring.

IRC runs a decentralised family of eight country programmes, connected through two regional hubs (Africa and Asia) and supported by the global Change Hub. These are delivered by a flexible workforce of some 100 staff. Though learning, monitoring, and reporting is a combined effort, with part-time contributions from about 10 people, typically one person for each programme will have the Planning, Monitoring and Reporting- PMR (or PML, MEAL) role. In 2023, in recognition of enhancing data for decision making and strengthening accountability, the global Change Hub strengthened its team with a PMR programme officer based in Ghana.

Each programme has an annual plan that is prepared in October–December of the previous year. The annual plans set out the annual and medium-term targets and the key activities and outputs to achieve them. They also specify the resources needed and highlight the risks. In addition to IRC’s programme-level annual plans, we also draw up plans for individual projects. These are specific to each donor or project.

Each programme team reports and reflects on the implementation of its annual plan through a process of collaborative reflection. These reflections are based on the results delivered by IRC’s monitoring tools as described in the following sections and are complemented by analyses of national and global data sources and the information and insights obtained from different projects.

## 2.5 Outcome monitoring

In view of our Theory of Change, local, country, and global programmes measure progress against annual and medium-term outcome targets. The specific targets vary among countries, but all align with the D30 Theory of Change.

Progress in country programmes is measured according to the six (upstream) outcomes in our Theory of Change (Figure 1). The following are the outcomes that we work to achieve through implementing our activities at local, national, and global levels.

1. High level political will accelerates progress.
2. Key actors have adequate capacity.
3. Sector finance is secured.
4. Citizens demand higher levels of services.
5. Collective action drives transformative change.
6. Organisational change supports Destination 2030.

Our Theory of Change defines these outcomes as the critical pathways towards establishing strong, reliable, equitable WASH systems in local and country levels. These systems are required to deliver sustainable, equitable, high-quality water, sanitation, and hygiene services. We track indicators for systems strength and WASH service levels in our partner areas and focus countries. We also monitor international trends as part of our commitment to drive the global achievement of SDG 6.

These outcomes, whether upstream (actor capacity) or downstream (service levels), are tracked using a combination of the following methods.

### Method 1: Qualitative Information Systems

Our upstream Theory of Change outcomes are measured using Qualitative Information System (QIS) ladders<sup>2</sup> and are scored separately at both partner area and national level. Modified indicators are used for the global level. The QIS ladders use ordinal scoring scales to convert qualitative information (from participatory appraisals) into numbers, enabling the capture of rich descriptive information as well as semi-quantitative scores to help track change over time. These are the 'how' of delivering strong WASH systems and change within WASH systems.

During 2023, we have been adapting the QIS ladders for our D30 framework. We maintained historical comparability for leadership and capacity measurement, but not for model and partnership measurement. For leadership and capacity measurements, data collected at our partner districts shows significant progress over the past five years. The results of the gains made in the leadership (21 points increase) and capacity (28 points increase) -see Figure 3- can also be linked to advancements in the planning, learning and adaptation, and monitoring where trainings, learning events, working groups encouraged district stakeholders to take on leadership roles and enhance their capacity to improve WASH within their districts.

<sup>2</sup> A Likert scale is a common rating scale which enables a balanced response, in our case, ranging from 0 to 5. The benchmark statements for the building block elements are scored from 0 (non-existent) to 5 (exists, and fully applied).

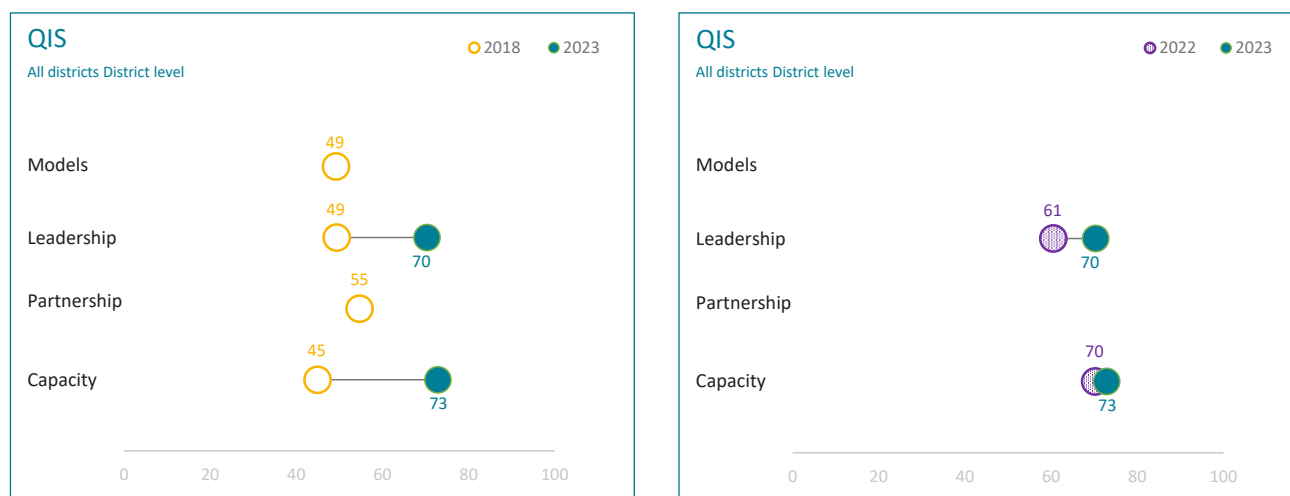


Figure 3: QIS results for all districts

### Method 2: Monitoring the strength of national and partner area WASH systems: scoring the WASH system building blocks<sup>3</sup>

By achieving the outcomes in the Theory of Change, the strength of the WASH system will be increased overall. The building blocks are a way of breaking down the complexity of the WASH system; looking at it through different lenses that allow it to be more easily understood and measured. Each of the nine WASH system building blocks is evaluated and scored at the district and national level using a set of 3-5 Likert scale indicators (benchmarks representing the key aspects of that building block). An abbreviated set of indicators is used to specifically assess the systems for hygiene and extra-household settings.

### Method 3: WASH services monitoring

In partner areas and focus countries, IRC programmes strive to follow the SDG 6 indicators using the JMP definitions and methodology, and to align with national monitoring systems wherever possible. The JMP identifies a service ladder whose rungs consist of five distinct service levels: surface water, unimproved, limited, basic, and safely managed. Like the **JMP**, we use a combination of household surveys, infrastructure, water quality, and administrative data to estimate the proportion of the population being served at each level. Criteria include technology type, protection from contaminants, distance from home, and availability.

Each level up from 'surface water' or 'no access' represents a significant improvement in the safety and security of the supply. In the D30 framework we have taken this further and introduced the concept of 'basic plus'. The basic plus indicator is added to fill the globally undefined area between basic and safely managed services. In the case of water, basic plus means that a water service must meet the definition of basic services as well as at least one of the three criteria of 'safely managed'.

3. The nine WASH building blocks as defined by IRC are: institutions and coordination; policy and legislation; regulation/accountability; finance; planning; monitoring; infrastructure; water resource management; and learning and adaptation. For more information, see [Huston and Moriarty 2018](#).

The basic plus indicator captures progress in service levels for millions of people that would otherwise not be captured. This helps us to drive progress towards universal access to safe services, and eventually ‘safely managed’ services by using a variety of context-appropriate strategies.

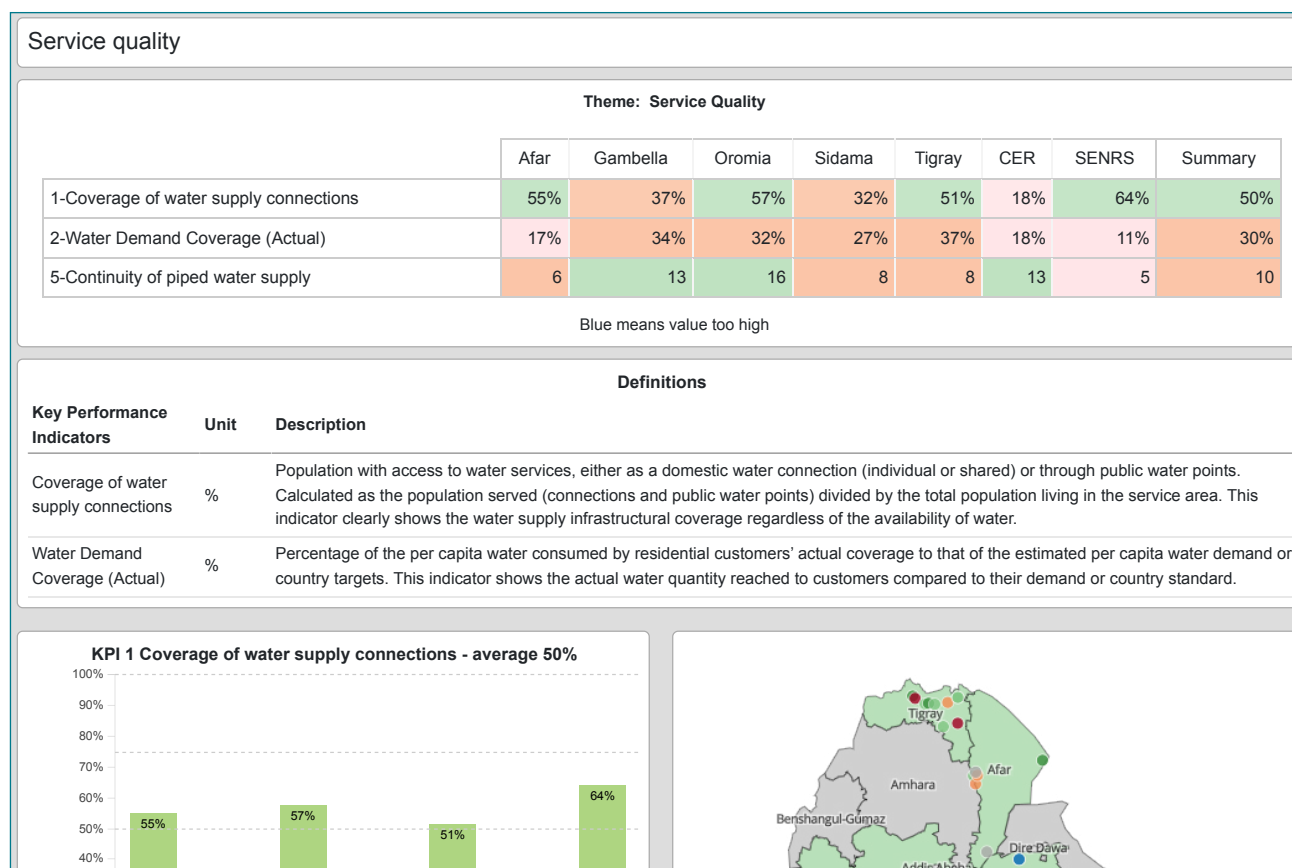


Figure 4: Example of urban utility performance monitoring developed with UNICEF for utilities in Ethiopia

At district level, we work with government partners in focus districts to adapt, support and strengthen their monitoring systems, and to bring these in line with JMP and national methodologies to enable the most resource-efficient and accurate methodology possible. Where data from these sources is insufficient, we supplement government monitoring with our own survey data.

A good example of this is our collaboration with UNICEF in Ethiopia to strengthen utility performance monitoring, using the national guidelines. This process entails capacity building at utility level, capturing information and data and collating it into an actionable format. (Figure 45). This process fits into a wider context of improving asset management, where we use the **Life Cycle Costing** tool (applied in 10 districts in Rwanda under the Isoko y’Ubuzima initiative) developed for the WASH Systems Academy and tools made available by **mWater**.

At national level, we draw our data from the country-led monitoring system using both asset and household data. We collect this data from both JMP and national datasets (from ministries responsible for water and sanitation and/or national statistics agencies). For more information on the JMP methodology, go to [washdata.org/monitoring/methods](http://washdata.org/monitoring/methods).

#### Method 4: Proxy indicators

Systems are complex and many interconnected factors give rise to the perceived performance (or lack of performance) of a service delivery system. To avoid excessive data collection, we also use proxy indicators to obtain insight into specific aspects of a system or building block. This may be in the form of primary data collection or by tracking secondary metrics available through existing surveys. Partner reporting by SWA, GLAAS and JMP for example are used in the Results Framework.

## 2.6 Activity and output monitoring

To reflect on outcomes, programmes report on the implementation (successes and failures) of their key outputs in the 12-month, end-of-year internal reporting. In addition, the management has monthly meetings with the CEO in which progress and challenges are discussed which lead to adaptations being made. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, programmes conduct detailed activity monitoring according to their own needs and minimise reporting to the global framework.

All programmes also report on a number of shared output indicators that help us track our scope and reach as an organisation. Many of these output indicators have been tracked since 2017 and include: published outputs, information on the people trained, the platforms and networks facilitated, and several indicators on the audiences reached through our communications. These results are summarised in the 'IRC at a glance' table (chapter 1), along with some new D30 indicators, and are presented over the years in our data dashboard [www.ircwash.org/data-behind-our-work](http://www.ircwash.org/data-behind-our-work). Within the OFA, Alliance-wide PowerBI data dashboards were established, harnessing collaboration and joined planning.

[Annex 3](#) gives details on progress of key outputs of IRC programmes in 2023.

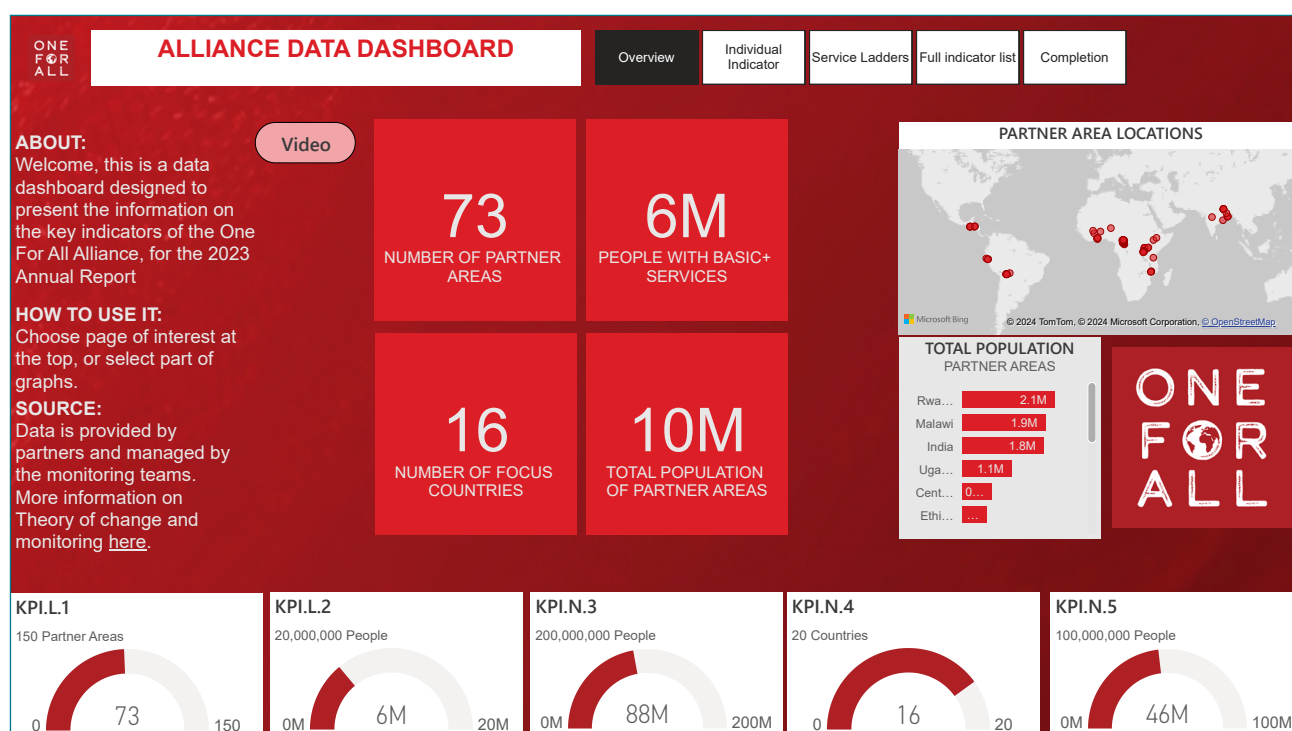


### 3. Progress against outcomes in 2023

This section presents the status of the overall progress of WASH systems strengthening and service level improvements in IRC’s focus countries and globally. This is followed by a brief section on each country programme and the global programme.

#### 3.1 Progress on WASH systems strengthening

We know that systems change takes time and requires continuous evidence-based adaptation. IRC has measured the strength of district systems in its partner districts and focus countries since 2017. In 2020, we launched our **results dashboard** which gives the public access to our data. In 2022, we took it further internally by developing a ‘Data Playground’ which includes monthly monitoring data, WASH Systems Academy information, key performance indicators (KPIs) and more. In 2023, we have extended this by combining our results data with those of OFA members and creating joined, filterable dashboards, which we are due to make externally available from 2024 onwards. This enhances the ability to share data and information more widely and gradually leads to new insights for decision making.



The One For All Data Dashboard is being prepared for a wider audience

Change in systems strengthening is captured in the building blocks (Figure 5, Figure 6). We take a five-year period (2018-2023) to understand long-term changes and compare with last year to identify smaller shifts.

The five-year comparison (Figure 5) shows an impressive improvement across the board at district level, with an average improvement from 2.4 to 3.3 (18.6 percentage points). Five years ago, the selected districts had weaker systems than the national level, but the systems strengthening approach has resulted in these districts now scoring better than the national level.

At national level, systems strengthening has also seen long-term improvements, albeit with a smaller shift from 2.7 to 3.0 (6.8 percentage points)<sup>4</sup>. We expect a slower change due to greater lock-in of current systems and the complexity of engaging with more stakeholders on a larger political scale.

Generally, we see strong legislation yet weak regulation at both national and district level (Table 1). When comparing 2022 to 2023, (Figure 6), we are encouraged to see each building blocks is progressing year- on-year, and overall these results represent a positive trend for WASH systems strengthening despite some challenging conditions.

However, the finance building block buckles the positive trend and shows slippage, both at district and national level. Though the building block is not defined by the amount of finance, it does reflect the global trends of the cost-of-living crisis, the war in Ukraine and the reallocation of development funds towards climate funds or propping domestic situations. This emphasises the need for our new Heads of State Initiatives for Water and Sanitation focused on engaging with the wider national development agenda and fostering systems leadership among high-level political actors.

The monitoring and planning building blocks experienced the biggest improvements and that can be attributed to IRC's continuous contribution to master planning with tools such as life cycle costing and monitoring.

Table 1: 2023 status of system strength measured by building blocks

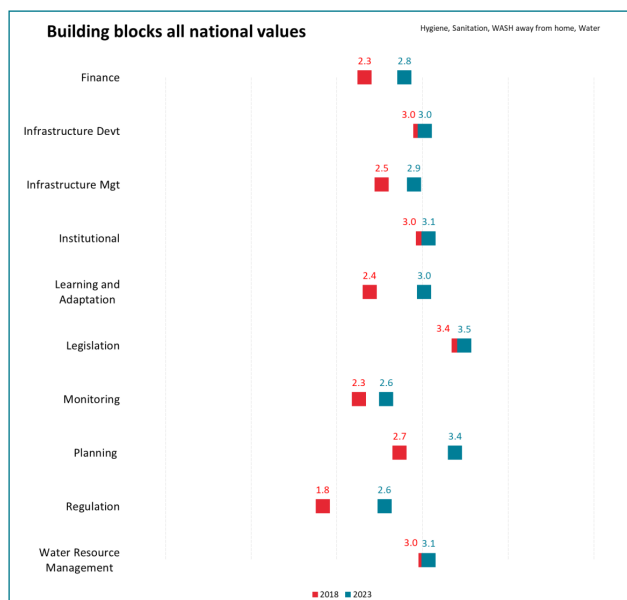
	Burkina Faso	Ethiopia	Ghana	India (Orissa state)	Niger	Mali	Uganda	Global
<b>National</b>				<b>State</b>				
National average building block strength (out of 5)	2.8	2.7	3.3	2.6	4.1	*	4.0	3.0
2018-2023 average system strength growth (%)	2%	18%	-1%	4%	*	*	23%	7%
Strongest National BB 2023	Legislation	Planning	Institutional	Water Resource Management	Planning	*	Planning	Legislation

4. Using the Likert scale where 5 = 100%, a 10-percentage point increase equals a 0.5 increase on the Likert scale.

	Burkina Faso	Ethiopia	Ghana	India (Orissa state)	Niger	Mali	Uganda	Global
<b>National</b>				<b>State</b>				
Weakest National BB 2023	Regulation	Regulation	Learning and Adaptation	Monitoring	Infrastructure management	*	Infrastructure management	Regulation
<b>District</b>								
average building block strength (out of 5)	3.7	3.3	3.0	*	3.0	*	4.2	3.3
2018-2023 average system strength growth (%)	23%	35%	5%	*	*	*	33%	19%
Strongest District BB 2023	Planning	Institutional	Regulation	*	Finance	*	Learning and Adaptation	Legislation
Weakest District BB 2023	Regulation	Regulation	Water resource management	*	Regulation	*	Infrastructure management	Regulation

\* Insufficient data

### Changes at national level – all sectors



### Changes at district level – all sectors

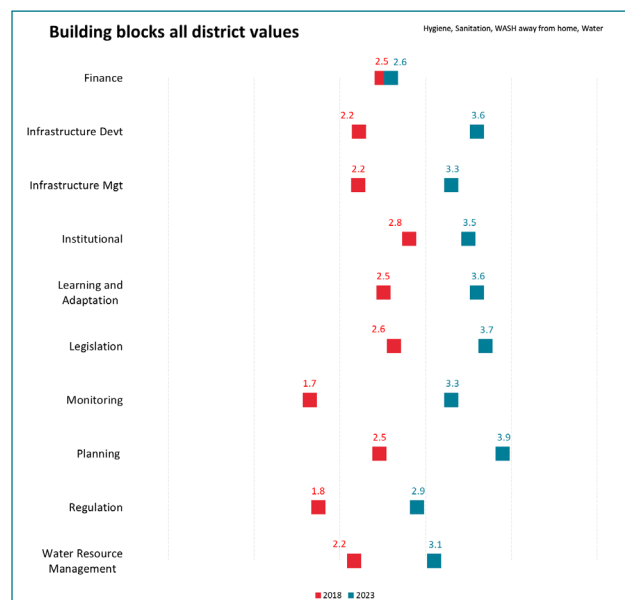
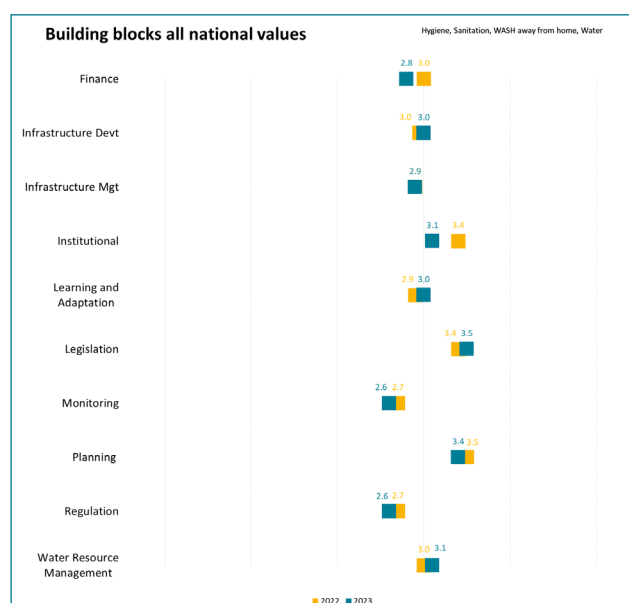


Figure 5: The change in systems strength over a five-year period

### Changes at national level – 2022 to 2023



### Changes at district level – all sectors 2022 to 2023

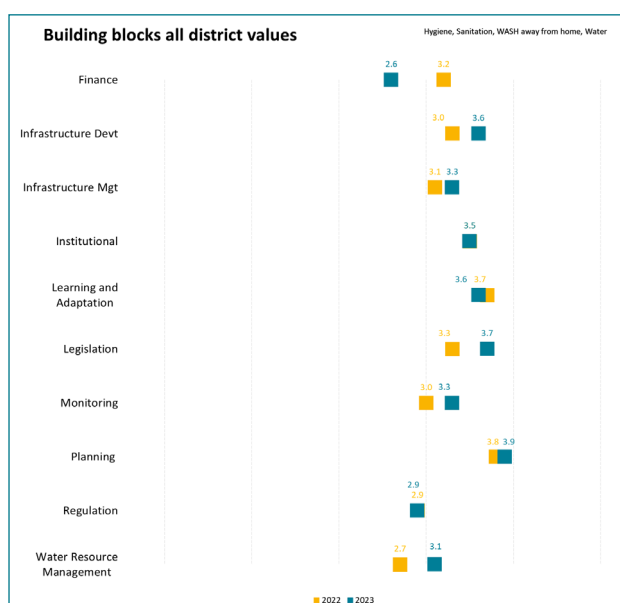


Figure 6: The change in systems strength from 2022 to 2023

For disaggregated data on water, sanitation, hygiene and WASH away from home, see the Annex 2 or use filters in [our online dashboard](#).

## 3.2 Progress in WASH service delivery

The goal of strengthening WASH systems is always to improve the water, sanitation, and hygiene services that people are using. We strive to achieve universal and sustainable services in line with the SDG 6 commitments in our partner districts and at national and global levels where we work.

While achieving the SDG targets for water already requires a 4x step change globally (*JMP 2022*), progress on sanitation and hygiene in Africa needs an much more dramatic step change – it requires a 23x increase in rates of progress for safely managed sanitation, a 13x increase for basic sanitation and a 3x increase for open defecation, and complete turnaround of the declining hygiene trend (Figure 7, *JMP 2023*). These figures are startling, and we can now see that the Covid pandemic did not result in a lasting uptick in hygiene services that could have been expected with the initial 2020 global campaigns on handwashing.

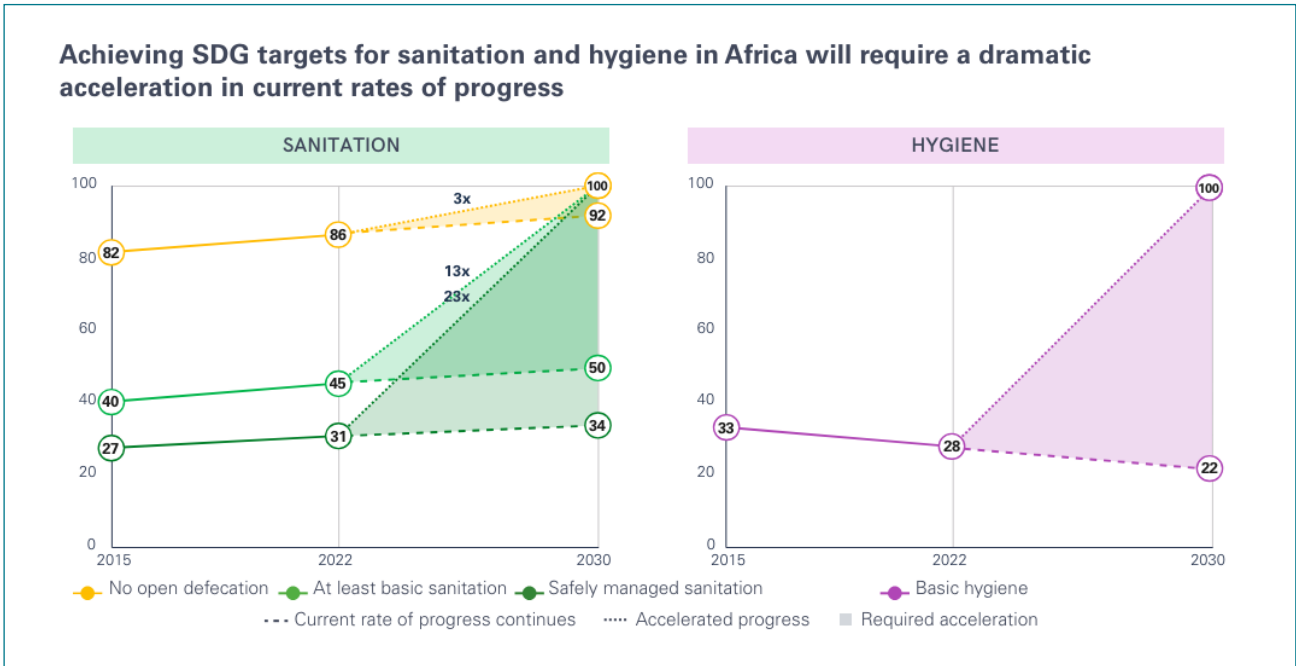


Figure 7: Coverage of sanitation and hygiene services in Africa 2015-2022 (%), and acceleration required to meet universal coverage (>99%) by 2030

We see these global challenges reflected in our partner districts, compounded by the additional challenge of significant population growth. For example, the population in South Ari District in Ethiopia (Figure 8) is expected to increase from 167,000 in 2017 to 243,000 in 2030. This means that service providers need to maintain existing services, increase service levels, reach the un-reached and expand to accommodate population growth.

When considering that this also applies to sanitation, hygiene, and WASH in institutions (both schools and health posts), the challenge is evident.

Table 2 shows the current service levels which are still a long way from full coverage. This is partly due to the introduction of new partner areas in 2022, with baseline datasets established in 2023. The coverage in these new areas is low – which was one of the reasons for selecting them. Reference is made to [Annex 2](#) which contains details on service levels and population numbers.

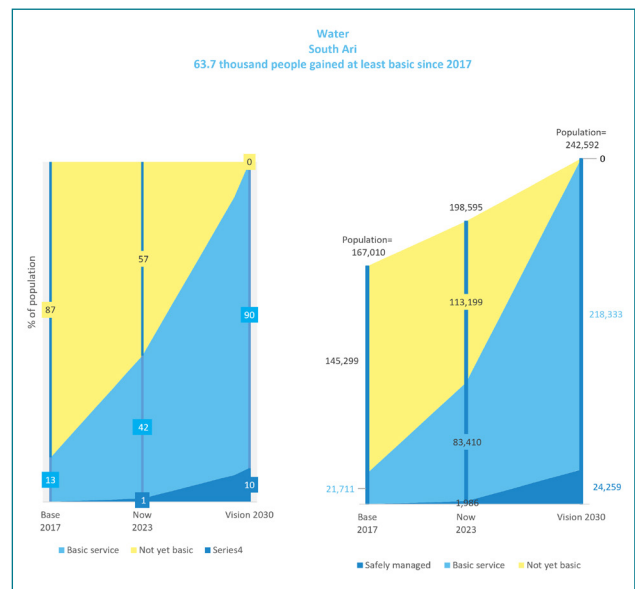





Figure 8: Water coverage and target for South Ari, in % and in population



Table 2: 2023 status of service levels

		People*	Schools***	Health posts***
 Drinking water	51% Water at least basic	1,008,000 out of 2.0 mln	461 out of 1,069	111 out of 254
 Sanitation	20% Sanitation at least basic	402,000 out of 2.0 mln	513 out of 1,069	19 out of 254
 Hygiene	12% Hygiene	138,000 out of 1.2 mln**	449 out of 1,069	78 out of 254

\* excludes N'Goutjina (Mali) and Tenkodogo (Niger) as data has not yet been available

\*\* excludes N'Goutjina (Mali) and Tenkodogo (Niger) and Ghana due to insufficient hygiene data

\*\*\* excludes Ganjam (India) and Tenkodogo (Niger) due to insufficient data

At a first glance, the numbers are lower than reported in 2022 (54% for water, 36% for sanitation and 13% for hygiene), particularly for sanitation. However, 2022 had less data (of only 1.29 mln people). If we compare the same areas of 2022 with 2023, we have retained last year's values in those districts.

The sanitation and hygiene values are both low – highlighting the need to focus on these in the years leading up to 2030. Particularly the low hygiene numbers are disappointing as the uptake due to Covid handwashing campaigns has not taken place.

The sanitation score for health posts (just 7.5%) is due to a strict criteria for achieving coverage (Percentage of hospitals, health centres, and clinics which have improved facilities are usable, separated for patients and staff, separated for women and providing menstrual hygiene facilities and meeting the needs of people with limited mobility), with inclusive sanitation and menstrual components in particular completely missing in many institutions.

### 3.3 Changing partner areas

The population numbers in our partner areas remained relatively stable between 2022 and 2023. In 2023, IRC's small-scale Honduras programme was transferred to Water For People, following years of close collaboration within the Para Todos Por Siempre (Everyone Forever) movement. Burkina Faso brought one new partner district on board Tenkodogo. Overall, this led to a small reduction in our partner areas from 2.2 million down to 2.1 million people (Table 3).

Bangladesh has become a focus country in 2023, and the partner upazila area will be selected in 2024 from one of the hotspot areas (see 3.4.4).

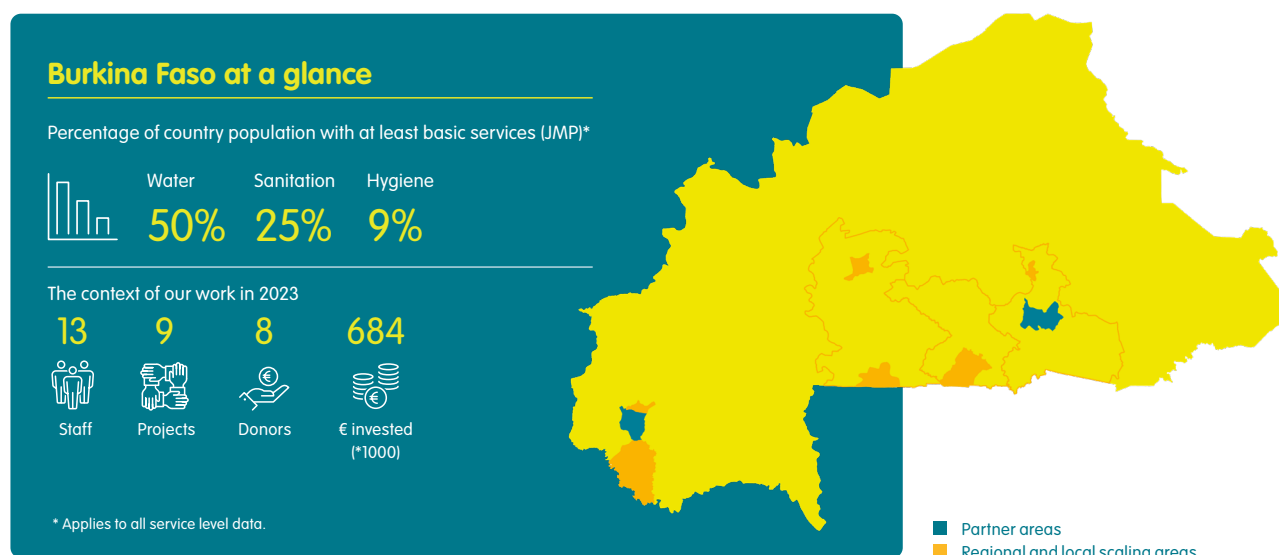
Table 3 Changes in partner districts

Country	District name	Status	Population
Bangladesh	To be decided	To be added in 2024	-
Burkina Faso	Banfora	Existing	178,550
	Tenkodogo	New in 2023	160,817
Ethiopia	Negelle Arsi	Existing	347,974
	South Ari	Existing	198,595
Ghana	Asunafo North	New in 2022	154,433
	Asunafo South	New in 2022	94,278
	Asutifi North	Existing	72,000
	Tano North	New in 2022	96,247
India	Ganjam district (Chhatrapur block)	Existing	105,723
Mali	N'Goutjina	New in 2022	30,247
Niger	Kornaka	New in 2022	213,269
Uganda	Bunyangabu	Existing	208,000
	Kabarole	Existing	235,400
<b>Total 2023</b>			<b>2,104,999</b>
Honduras	16 PTPS municipalities	Removed	267,504
<b>Total removed as partner district</b>			<b>267,504</b>

### 3.4 Strengthening WASH systems in IRC focus countries

The next few pages are dedicated to snapshots of the context, progress, challenges, and key results from our focus countries and partner districts in 2023. Data on building blocks and service levels are presented showing how we're achieving systemic change at scale, driven by systems leaders working at local and national levels who are influencing at the highest levels of decision making.

### 3.4.1 Burkina Faso



In Burkina Faso, the prevailing security situation has deteriorated, contributing to the overall decline in the country that makes our systems strengthening approach challenging to implement. Political governance has regressed over the past five years, impacting the effectiveness of the WASH sector. The January 2022 coup d'état significantly disrupted the implementation of various initiatives at national and local levels due to the dissolution of municipal councils. The leadership of the national utility ONEA has weakened due to capacity constraints that we are striving to address.

In light of these challenges, we are reflecting on our 2030 targets and applicability of our Theory of Change particularly with regards to influencing decision makers in the sector to adopt alternative approaches. Still, throughout 2023 we remained committed to providing technical support through knowledge management, capacity building, and advisory services. Our approach aims to empower stakeholders to gradually assume ownership of initiatives. Our analysis suggests that persistent engagement remains the most viable strategy for overcoming resistance to change among decision makers, despite the volatile political climate.

An example is at national level, where we are yet to make significant advances on institutional progress. The country has regressed with the priority to manage the insecurity crisis to the detriment of other sectors such as water and sanitation. The ministry has been reorganised and combined with the Ministry of Environment. An important development has been the establishment of a technical secretariat for humanitarian affairs in 2023, with which we actively engage.

At the district level, the institutional results are much more positive. In Banfora, the water, sanitation, and public hygiene department is gradually gaining autonomy with the implementation of WASH projects as part of the district master plan with the support of IRC. In 2023, the WASH department finalised the implementation of two projects funded by Oxfam for a total of about 80 million FCFA (123 000 Euros). All of this is thanks to IRC's support on advocacy and the mobilisation of financial resources for the implementation of the master plan. However,

leadership at local authority level has declined slightly as a result of institutional change, and it is important to continue building skills to enable local authorities to play their full role as main contracting authority.

On monitoring, IRC has developed a digital platform ([fermiers-bf.com](http://fermiers-bf.com)) for monitoring the operation of drinking water in the rural areas. The implementation of this platform will provide access to the reports of the management operators of the water piped systems and facilitate their review and the implementation of any recommendations made in these reports. IRC has mobilised funding to continue building the skills of the operators. At the district level, we supported the district of Banfora in monitoring water user associations. With the Tenkodogo municipality, we have started to set up a framework for monitoring WASH interventions.

Since 2017, IRC has been supporting the district of Banfora to improve the planning of its WASH activities through the master planning process. In 2022, we finalised the development of five district master plans including the one of Tenkodogo. In 2023, we continued to support the Tenkodogo district in implementing the master plan, and we raised €3.8 million to start the implementation of the Centre Ouest region master plan by improving the resilience and performance of WASH services by 2027. Hence, planning shows the highest progression, moving from 2.2 to 4.8 in five years (52 percentage points - Figure 9), turning from one of the weakest building blocks into one of the strongest.

Looking forward, IRC Burkina has conducted a study, supported by UNICEF, on the management of sanitation infrastructure in schools at the national level and a pilot has been conducted in two schools in 2023 for testing the delegated management of latrines in schools. In addition, through our advocacy efforts, the district of Banfora has ended its contract with the irregular operator and has signed a contract with a new contractor (Vergnet) for the management of public water services in rural areas, including simplified drinking water systems. In Tenkodogo, following the completion of the Sigriyaoghin water piped systems, IRC mobilised ONEA to set up a robust management system.

With regards to service level trends, at national level, the JMP 2020 report has highlighted the fact that Burkina Faso has regressed over the past five years, despite the efforts of all partners. Unfortunately, the situation will not improve in 2023. This situation already poses a problem in terms of the efficiency of the sector, which requires a far-reaching reform of the Ministry of Water and Sanitation and is reflected in our analyses for 2021 and 2022. Since our 2021 strategic review, it has become clear that Burkina Faso will not achieve the WASH SDGs by 2030 due to the continued deterioration of the political economy and security situation.

At district level, for Banfora and Tenkodogo, we were unable to assess service levels in 2023 (Figure 10: is based on prognosis). Since June 2023, we have temporarily withdrawn from Banfora due to the security situation and the end of funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. But in Tenkodogo, the results of our work are visible on the ground in terms of improved drinking water and hygiene services for the population.



Figure 9: District building blocks from Banfora district 2018-2023

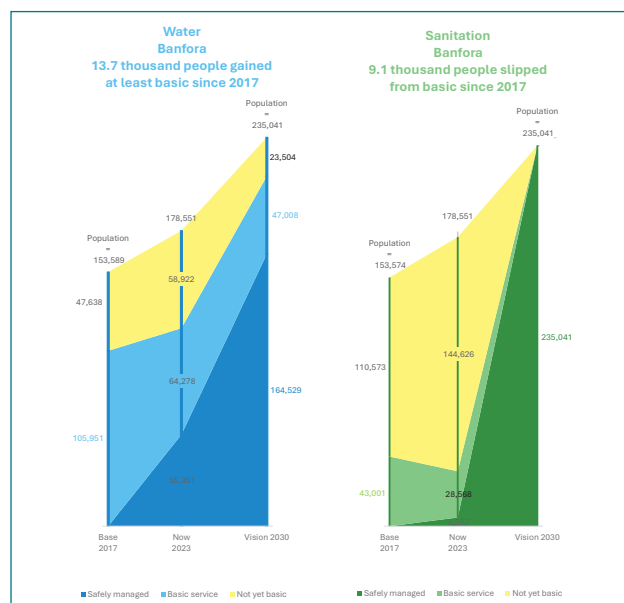
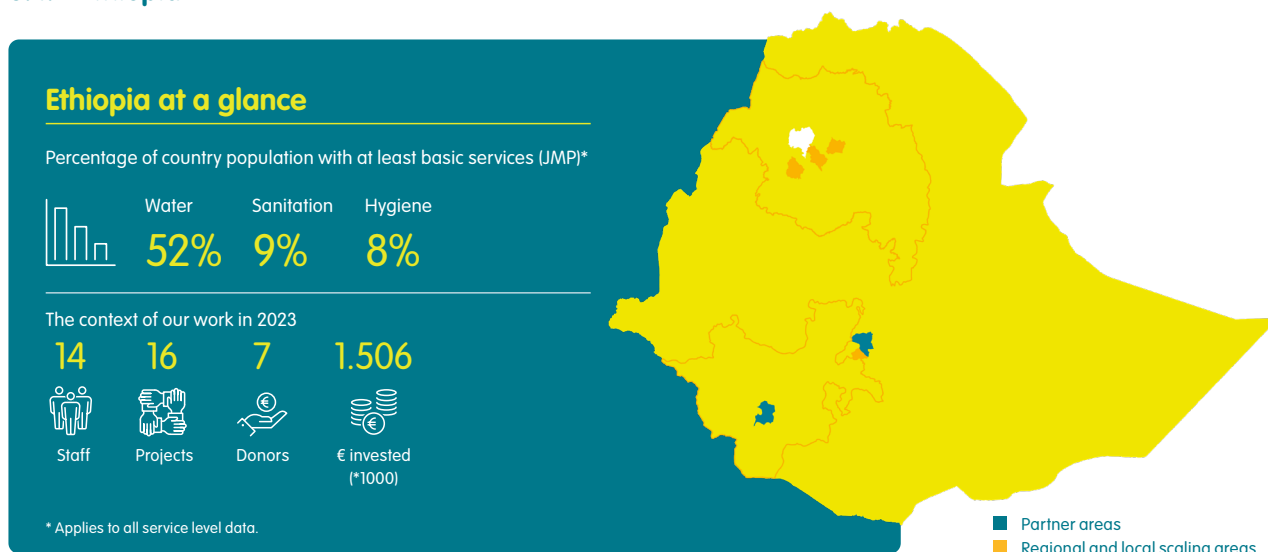


Figure 10: Progress towards the 2030 vision of Banfora district, Burkina Faso (household level)

### 3.4.2 Ethiopia



During the year, the WASH sector achieved a significant milestone with the creation of the national financing strategy. It is anticipated that this strategy will be endorsed early 2024. IRC WASH has played a pivotal role in its development by offering high-level technical assistance and by actively involving various stakeholders, including co-chairing the national WASH financing core working group.

In 2023, we intensified our efforts in our two partner districts (woredas) South Ari and Negelle Arsi. Our focus is now directed towards mobilising resources and efforts. We are following our systems strengthening approach, drawing upon insights and lessons learned, to aid these districts in realising their vision and meeting their targets.

At national level, we have been supporting national sanitation and hygiene reporting to AMCOW and national learning platforms (captured by an increase in scoring in Figure 11). The Ministry of Health finalised the 2021-2025 Health Transformation Plan – where Sanitation and Hygiene targets and ambitions are clearly stated – which has caused improvements across the planning and legislation building blocks.

Regarding the service level baseline (Figure 11), a lack of clarity at national level and the linkage to JMP definitions was a challenge. This year, we conducted sample-based household surveys and analysed service levels for our two partner districts, both South-Ari and Negelle Arsi woredas. The low sanitation (15%) and hygiene values (5%) show that systems strengthening needs to focus on sanitation and hygiene.

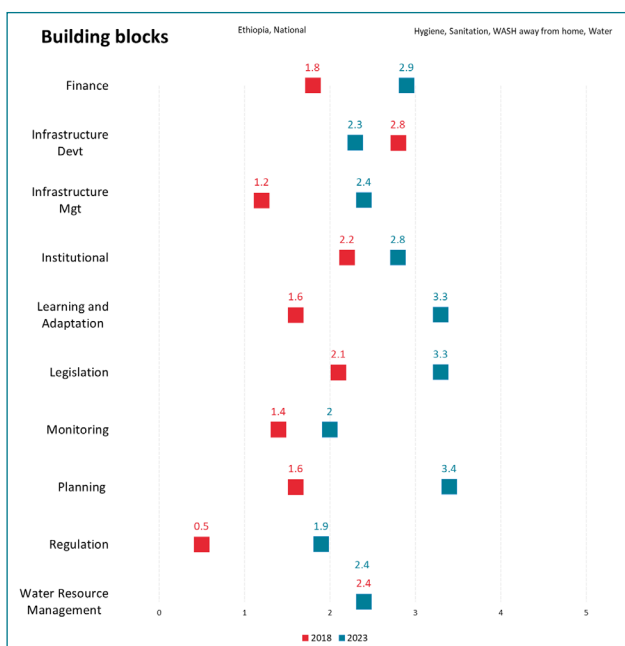


Figure 11: National building block scores 2018-2023, Ethiopia

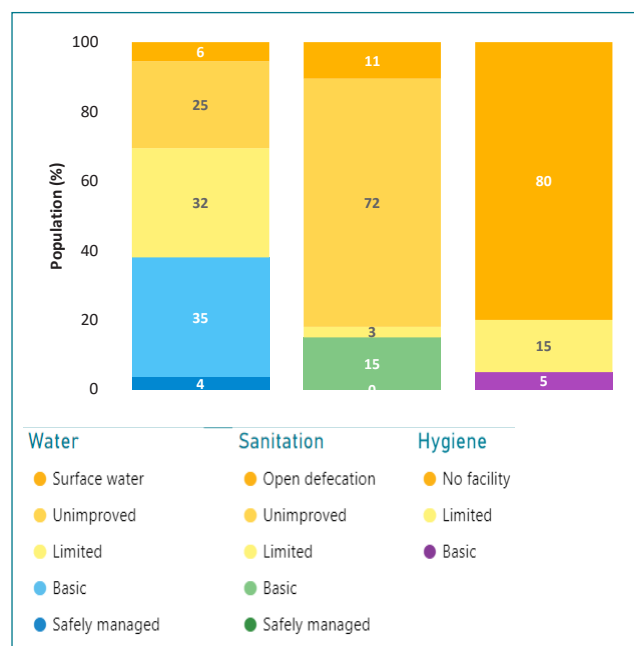
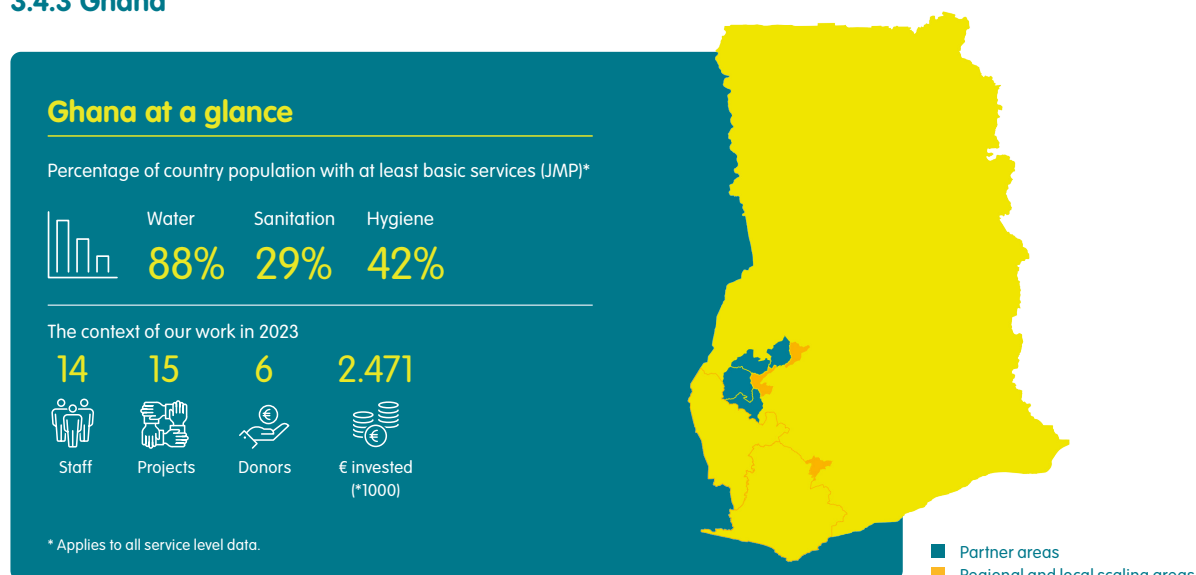


Figure 12: Combined service level data of, South Ari and Negelle Arsi, Ethiopia (household level).

### 3.4.3 Ghana



IRC is currently executing a five-year strategy (2022-2026) aimed at bolstering WASH systems both nationally and at the district level, ultimately expanding outreach to a larger populace. Our approach involves amplifying proven methodologies in Ghana while also delving into innovative avenues to expedite progress.

During this timeframe, we broadened our initiatives to translate the successful district-wide endeavour in the Asutifi North District into actionable programmes across three additional districts (Asunafo North, Asunafo South, and Tano North) within the Ahafo Region while initiating the interest of two districts to develop their master plans (Asutifi South and Tano South). To offer clear and targeted guidance to enhance the visibility of the WASH sector, the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, in collaboration with the National Development Planning Commission, launched the creation of a presidential compact for WASH. This initiative received support from Sanitation and Water for All, IRC, and UNICEF.

In 2023, IRC Ghana's interventions have significantly contributed to following building blocks as highlighted in Figure 13:

**Planning:** We have collaborated with the National Development Planning Commission (NPDC) to train key staff at the regional level to improve WASH planning. At the district level, we worked with the Ahafo Regional Coordinating Council to finalise and launch the master plans for three more districts and we are working with the remaining two districts to develop their master plans to achieve a nationwide coverage.

**Monitoring:** We have continued to support monitoring of WASH services in the focus districts to generate continuous data to inform planning and decision making. In 2023, we collected data in all six districts in the region to have an overview of assets and service levels to inform WASH decision making by districts and other stakeholders. We also partnered with the Ghana Statistical Service to map water facilities in 14 districts in the western region of Ghana. The findings have been published and shared with stakeholders at the regional level.



**Institutional:** We continued to support national efforts to review sector documents and strategies. We also supported knowledge management and sector learning through the support to the Resource Centre Network, Ghana.

**Regulation:** By supporting the promotion of advocacy for effective WASH practices in the district, and the strengthening of district staff overseeing water and sanitation systems, water sanitation management teams (WSMTS) led by community members within the district were able to make more effective decisions to advance WASH at the district level.

**Learning and Adaptation:** We continued to support Asutifi North district to run the District Learning Alliance Platform to foster learning and collaborated with the Ahafo Regional Coordinating Council to set up the Ahafo Regional Learning Alliance Platform to promote peer learning and uptake of innovations.

There are still areas which require further clarity to allow for progress in the implementation of reforms at the national level. These include a) finalising the process to transition Community Water and Sanitation Agency into a rural utility, b) expanding water service regulation to include the rural water sub-sector and c) providing further clarity on the role of private sector actors in water service delivery.

Concerning service levels, at the national level, the proportion of the population using at least basic services has increased from 85% to 88% (JMP 2023). 6% of the people still rely on unimproved and surface water sources. The proportion of the population using at least basic sanitation has risen from 23% to 29%, and there is also a marginal reduction in open defecation from 18% to 17%.



Figure 13: District building block scores from Asutifi North district 2018-2023

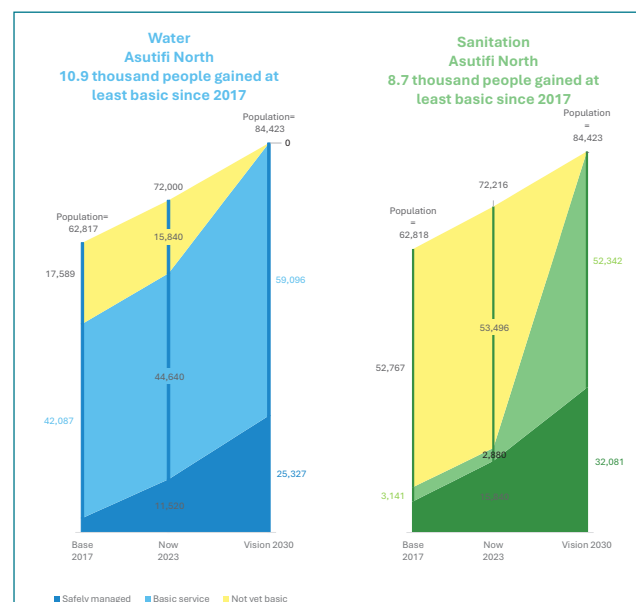
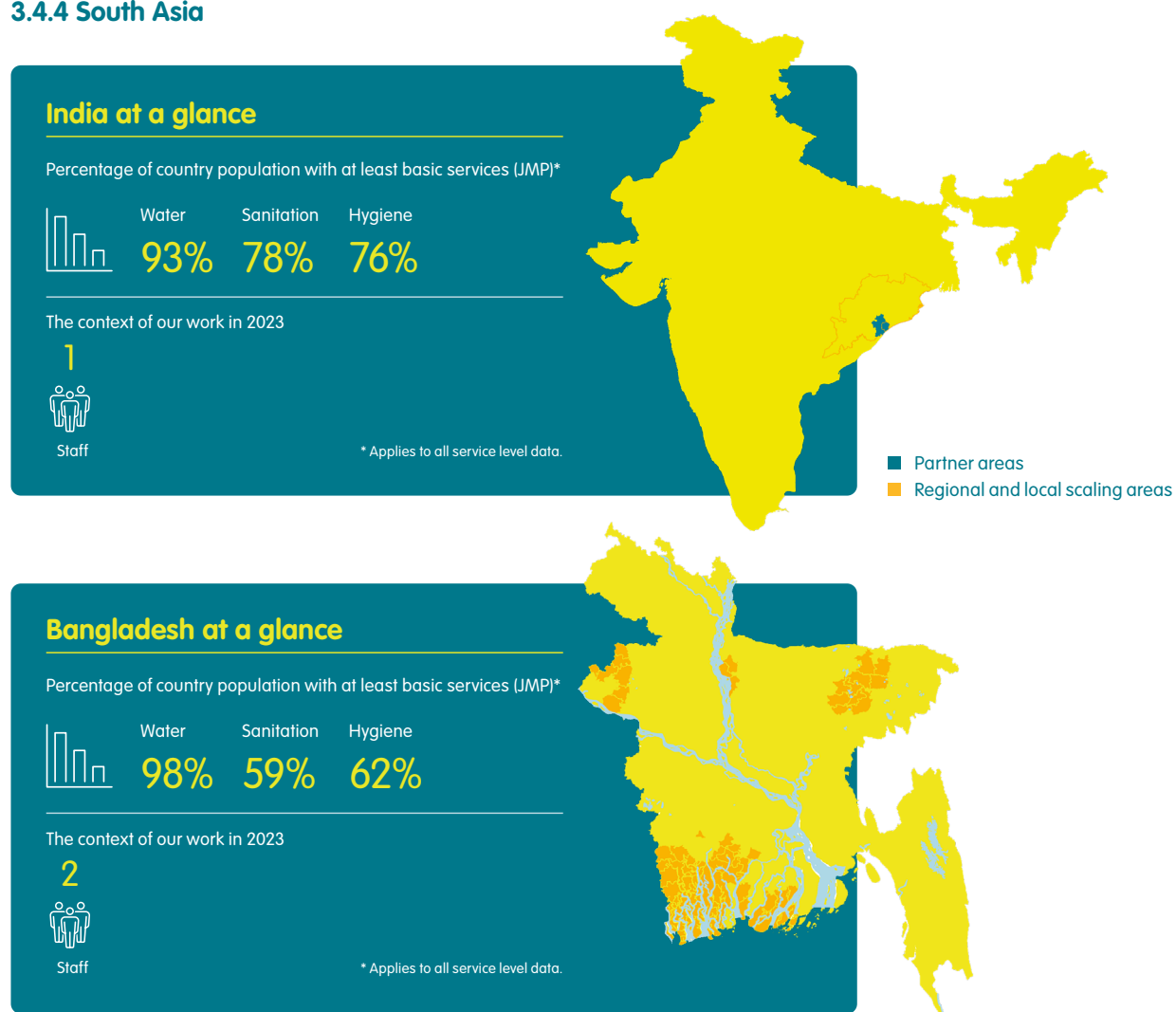


Figure 14: Progress towards the 2030 vision of Asutifi North district, Ghana (household level)

At the regional level, for the first time, the 2023 WASH service monitoring undertaken covered all six districts in the Ahafo Region. The initial pilot in the region was started in Asutifi North in 2017 and over the period there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of the population with access to basic water services from 82% in 2017 to 90% in 2023. Access of residents to improved sanitation services has increased considerably from 77% at baseline in 2018 to 99% in 2023, although the majority rely on shared toilets. The lessons and good practices from the pilot have now been expanded to the remaining five districts. The preliminary results from the 2023 service monitoring show that at least half of the population in the region has access to basic water services. More than a third of the population rely on unimproved water sources. The proportion of the population in the region relying on improved sanitation services is almost half. About third of the population practice open defecation.

### 3.4.4 South Asia



We continue with a hybrid approach, working on regional collaborations and influencing while having a presence in the respective countries for the credibility and legitimacy of our work. For this reason, the two countries are reporting together as a joint programme.

At the Asia regional level, IRC continued to work with the Asian Development Bank for the development of a course for their country government partners on systems strengthening focusing on urban areas. Apart from our involvement with the WASH Systems Academy, we've been offering assistance to the Swiss Consortium for Water and Sanitation across Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Cambodia, as well as to Agenda for Change partners in Nepal. We're focusing on enhancing their systems through a strengthening approach, aligning it with their respective initiatives.

We worked in Cambodia with 100fontaines to capture their business model on drinking water supply. We also are working with UNICEF and the Ministry of Rural Development in Cambodia to develop the finance strategy for sanitation in the country.

At the national level in India, with our Alliance partner Water For People, we collaborated with UNICEF, WaterAid, Aga Khan Foundation, and Tata Trust on the sector assessment at the national and state level in Odisha. This helped highlight existing strengths and areas for strengthening.

In the Water4Change project, we worked with a wide stakeholder group to further the work on water sensitive secondary cities in India. A national symposium and three city workshops helped in gathering experiences and expertise to inform the guidelines and the tool that is being developed to support decision making at the city level.

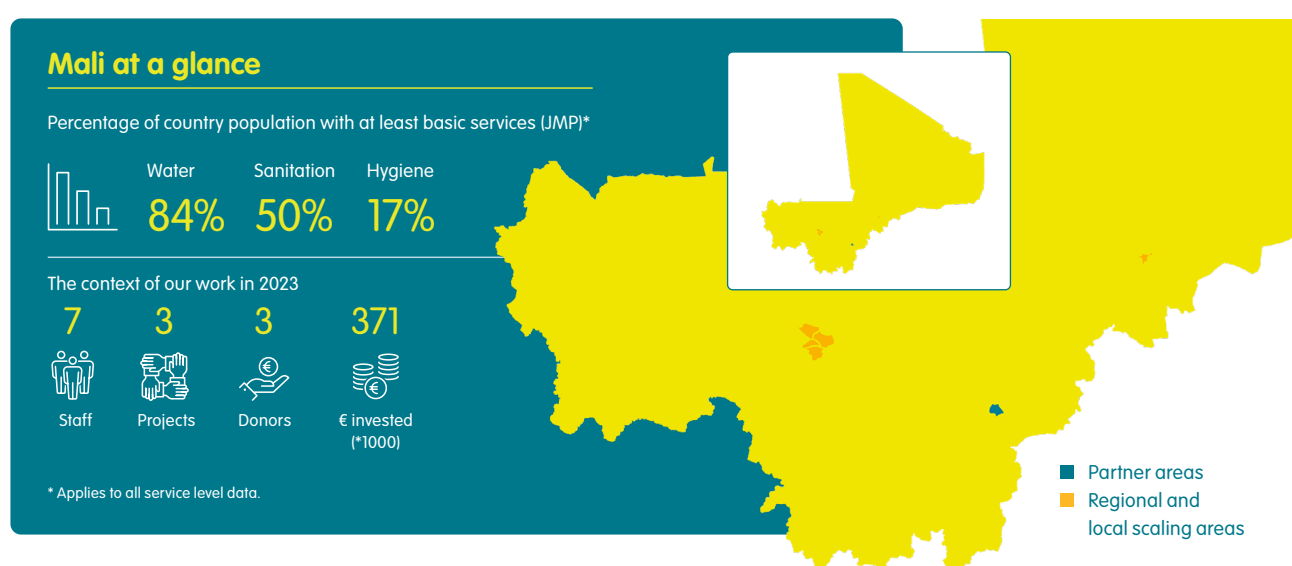
Extending our work on systems strengthening beyond WASH, we continue to work with Arisa and partners in India for the project Work: No Child's Business. We support the consortium of nine partners across three states and at the national level on reflecting and strengthening their programming on child labour and its interlinkages with education, livelihood, and access to public provisions.

In Bangladesh, IRC is working on the Netherlands WASH SDG Programme (the Programme) which is a five-plus year programme ending 2024 and funded by the Dutch Government through the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG), Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is implemented by a consortium of INGOs (the Consortium) comprising Plan International, SNV and the WASH Alliance International (WAI). The Bangladesh WASH Alliance sub-programme was initially implemented in six urban Municipalities and nine rural Union Parishads of two Upazilas (Barguna Sadar and Satkhira Sadar) all located in the southern coastal belt of Bangladesh. IRC enabled local government institutions to recognise the importance of planning, budgeting, and monitoring water and sanitation services.

In Bangladesh, IRC along with BRAC Bangladesh with funding from the Dutch embassy (EKN), is implementing a four-year project, "Equitable and Sustainable WASH Services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots 2022-2026", which aims to provide safe water and sanitation to one million people. The total budget is 464 million Bangladeshi Thaka (4.83 million Euros), including community contributions and external financing from banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs). The project works through a sub-district approach with a focus on four climate hotspots that cover 45 Upazilas of 14 districts. The project has three pathways. The first pathway aims to develop a microcredit model to finance climate-resilient water and sanitation services. The second pathway aims to improve access to technology and develop a maintenance model for these services. The third pathway aims to support local government institutions to implement a pro-poor water and sanitation strategy.

The project is making progress towards its goals of increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Initial results indicate that targets have been exceeded for the number of sanitation facilities with handwashing stations constructed and the number of people with access to safely managed sanitation services (including those reached through other BRAC programmes). There has also been some progress on water points, with 1,129 constructed through loans provided through BRAC Microfinance. The project is also providing hygiene awareness messages and financial and technical support to entrepreneurs for both water and sanitation businesses. The project is going to partner with the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) for the capacity building activities.

### 3.4.5 Mali



In 2023, IRC Mali marked a remarkable step forward in improving WASH services, even though the security and political situation causes concern. Our strategic approach, focused on strengthening local systems and extensive cooperation, has strengthened the **communal monitoring system**, vital to assess and increase the quality of WASH services.

We have effectively assisted municipalities in the development and implementation of their action plans, facilitating sustainable access to water, hygiene, and sanitation for the targeted populations. These efforts are in line with our D30 medium-term goal and Theory of Change, promoting better governance and cross-sectoral collaboration. The 2023 progress demonstrates our dedication to social justice and community progress, marking a significant step towards our long-term vision for WASH services in Mali.

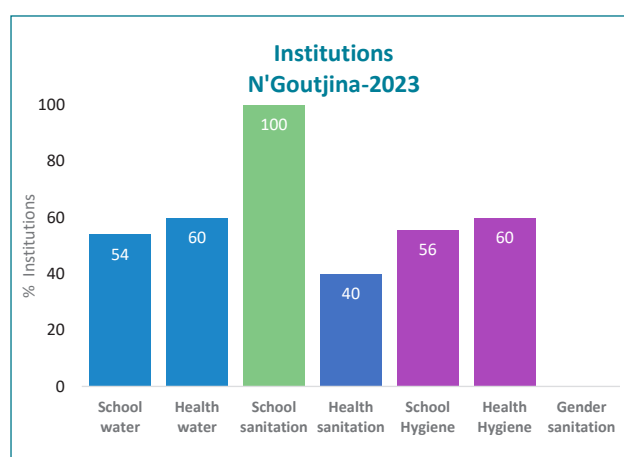


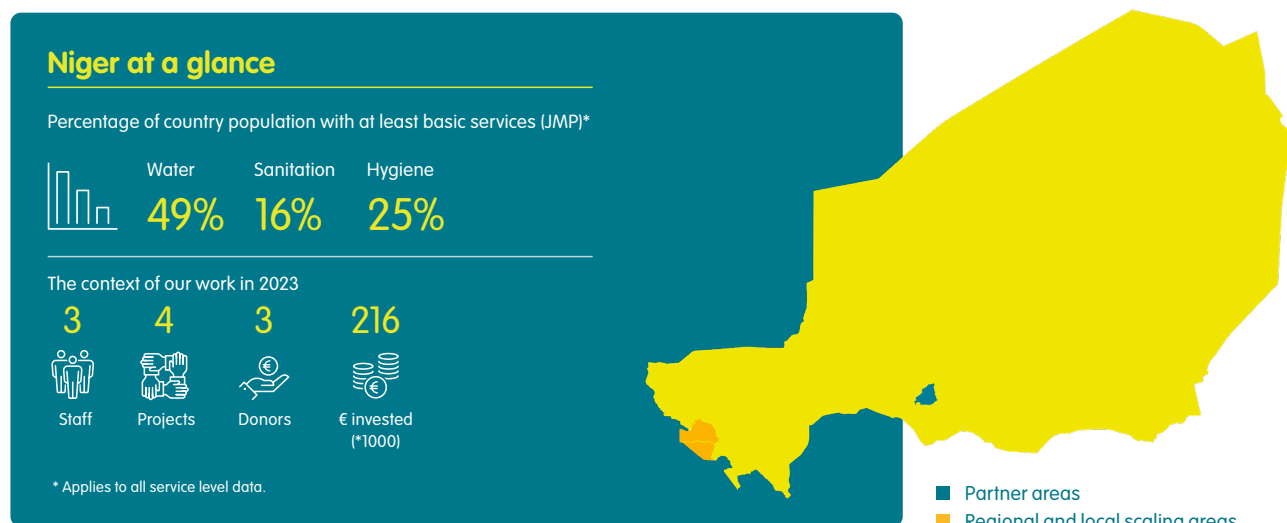
Figure 15: Status of institutional WASH, Mali

In 2022 and 2023, the number of schools and health centres in the municipalities covered by funding from the Conrad N. Hilton (Nossombougou, Ouolodo, Tioribougou) remained stable, illustrating a continuity in the service effort. In 2023, the introduction of data for UNICEF-supported communes (Nonkon, N'Goutjina, Dandoli) marked an expansion of the monitoring activities, with a first survey revealing the initial state of WASH services in these communes.

This stability and expansion reflect a sustained commitment to SDG targets, despite the challenges inherent in continuously improving service levels. Confidence in this data relies on its methodical collection, but further analysis and verification could strengthen this confidence and provide a more accurate picture of progress.

Concerning service levels, from 2019 to 2023, IRC Mali significantly improved access to WASH services in the intervention districts, with drinking water coverage in schools increasing from 55%-79% in 2020 to up to 82% in 2023, and sanitation reaching 90% in some schools. N'Goutjina as a new district, scores below these values (Figure 15). Nationally, 83% of households have access to a basic water service, but only 20% have access to safely managed sanitation services. This progress, while substantial at the district level, highlights persistent challenges at the national level, underscoring the need to scale up efforts to achieve SDG 6.

### 3.4.6 Niger



In 2022, Niger faced political turmoil, significantly impacting interventions in the Torodi and Makalondi districts. Movement restrictions in these areas led to a notable slowdown in activities, with certain locations becoming inaccessible. Additionally, engagement with national stakeholders presented challenges due to the absence of state actors such as the Ministry of Hydraulics and Sanitation, along with administrative delays in validating the country office's national roadmap for achieving SDG 6 in healthcare facilities and the costed action plan. Till 2023, the effects of the political crisis contribute to a negative trend in the advancement of WASH.

Despite these obstacles, IRC Niger made substantial strides in enhancing water and sanitation access in the country in 2023. One of the year's key accomplishments was providing technical assistance at the communal level to advance universal access to water, hygiene, and sanitation.

The building block assessments from 2021 (national) and 2022 (focus district) remain valid as a snapshot of the strength of the WASH systems in Niger today.

At national level:

- Regulation (Sanitation): There is no overall regulatory agency or body whose role is to enforce laws in the sanitation sector. There are specific control bodies such as the health, environmental, and veterinary authorities, the phytosanitary brigade and the National Environmental Assessment Office.
- Monitoring (schools, healthcare facilities): Since the end of 2021, the Ministry of Hydraulics, Sanitation and Environment has been monitoring WASH service levels in schools and healthcare facilities through a survey conducted by the National Statistics Institute (which was not the case before).
- Infrastructure management (Sanitation): there is no inventory, the roles and responsibilities of service providers and authorities are only clearly defined in urban areas.

At district level (in Kornaka):

- Water resources management: no source protection or preservation activities are conducted in the district and the operationalisation of the National IWRM Action Plan is not yet effective in the Goulbi N’Kaba sub-basin.
- Finance (HCFs): there are no financial mechanisms at the district level to systematically strengthen WASH services in healthcare facilities.

The JMP currently classifies Niger in the category of countries where progress is too slow (off track) in terms of achieving SDG 6. Substantial investment is needed to achieve universal coverage. This situation is the same throughout the country (including our focus district: some indicators are stagnating, and others are even deteriorating). Although JMP figures are slightly different from those published by the government, they remain solid.

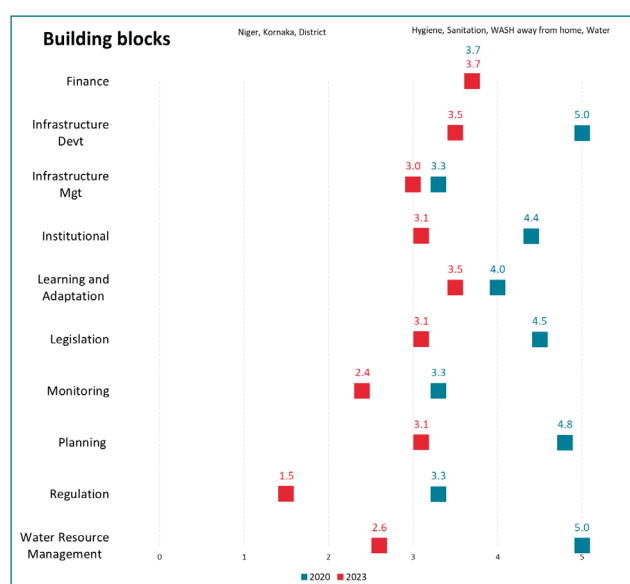


Figure 16: District building block scores from Kornaka district 2018-2023

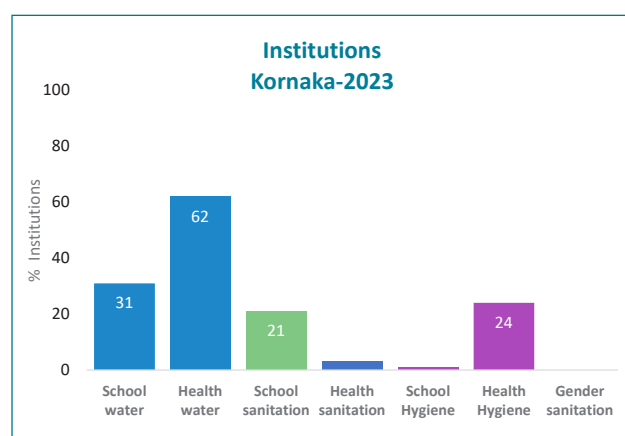
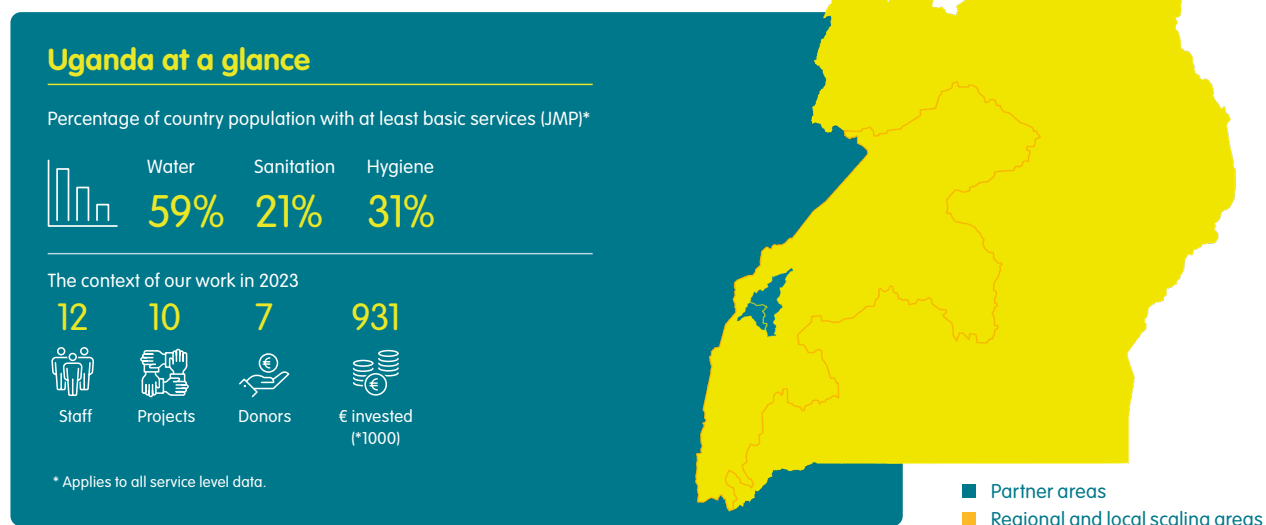


Figure 17: Status of institutional WASH from Kornaka district 2023, Niger

### 3.4.7 Uganda



In Uganda, the WASH sector is guided by the framework of the National Development plan III. In our partner areas, the 2018-2030 WASH Master Plan (Kabarole), 2020-2030 WASH Roadmap (Bunyangabu) are central to the efforts of government, IRC, and our partners.

Rwimi Health Centre III (Bunyangabu) has been transformed into a model reference centre for WASH in healthcare facilities after the construction of a medical waste incinerator and a toilet block with access for people with a disability and provisions for menstrual hygiene management. IRC helped increase access to safely managed water supply (4.4 kms) in Mubali, Kabarole serving an estimated population of 600 people for 4.4 kms under the public private partnership with the National Water and Sewerage Corporation. Overall, implementation of water projects was worth 185k euros, achieving 81% absorption capacity by the District Water Office.

IRC supported Kabarole district local government in establishing eight sub-county and one District Water Supply Services Boards. The Water Supply Services Boards are a professional management structure through which the district will ensure smooth operation and maintenance of water supply systems.

Service level monitoring is done on a bi-annual basis, with last year's values showing low for sanitation and hygiene (Figure 19). This challenges our approach and closer collaboration with health sector has been pursued. In addition, WASH data portals ([go.mwater.co/kabarole/mis](http://go.mwater.co/kabarole/mis); [go.mwater.co/bunyangabu/mis](http://go.mwater.co/bunyangabu/mis)) were created to strengthen discussion.

Through district/regional learning platforms (District WASH Task Team, District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee, Albertine Regional Water and Environment Week), we continue to see adoption of new approaches and technologies such as sanitation as a business and market-based sanitation.



Together with Water For People, we mobilised resources from Agenda for Change, Osprey Foundation, Waterloo Foundation and UNOPS. And we look forward to developing a national WASH strategy and a joint resource mobilisation strategy.

The table below presents the performance of the building blocks for the period 2017-2023 highlighting progressive increase across all building blocks, most especially for the year 2023. (For the years 2021 and 2022, data was not captured.)

Table 4 : Performance of the building blocks 2017-2023in Kabarole district, Uganda

Building Blocks	2017	2018	2019	2020	2023
Finance	2.0	2.7	2.8	3.2	3.7
Infrastructure Development	2.3	2.7	3.0	3.7	4.0
Infrastructure Management	2.0	2.0	2.8	3.4	3.5
Institutional	2.3	3.0	2.3	3.8	4.0
Learning and Adaptation	3.0	3.2	3.6	4.8	4.5
Legislation	2.3	4.0	2.0	3.5	4.0
Monitoring	3.0	2.8	3.0	4.0	4.2
Planning	4.0	4.0	3.2	4.1	4.5
Regulation	3.0	3.0		4.1	4.2
Water Resource Management	2.5	2.6		3.0	3.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>

From Figure 18, it can be observed that there is advancement at district level over the five-year period. This is also visible in the year-on-year period between 2022 and 2023 (Annex 3). This is apart from the finance building block for the 2022-2023 financial year, as some allocations were made but gaps remain.

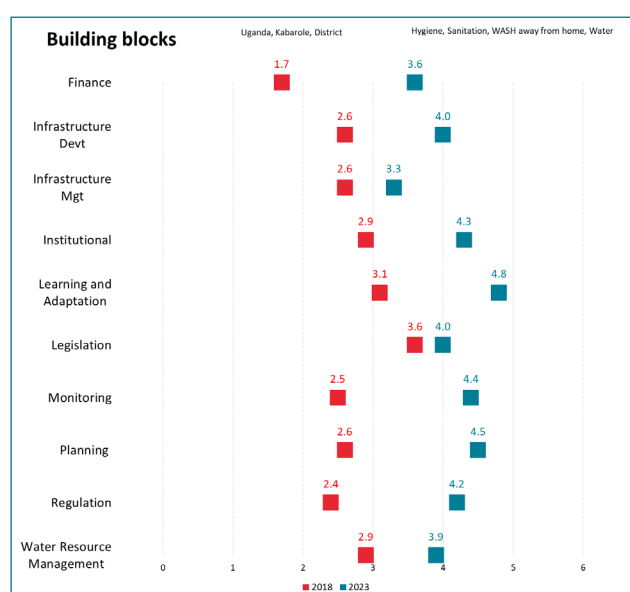
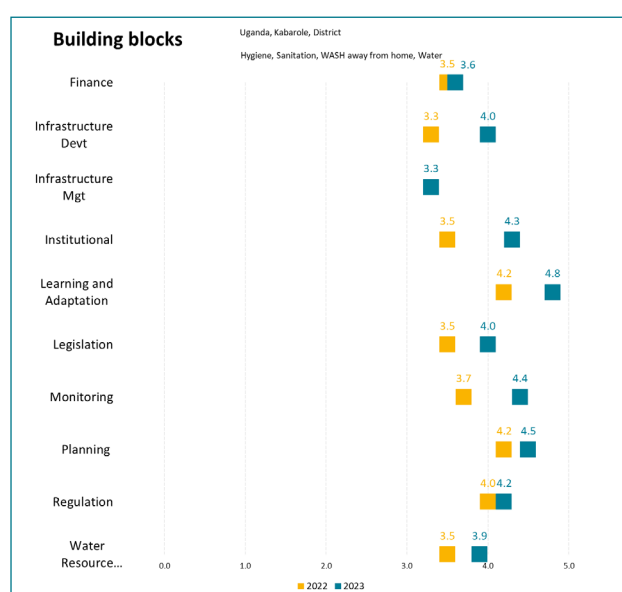


Figure 18: District building block scores from Kabarole district 2018-2023



District building block scores from Kabarole district 2022-2023

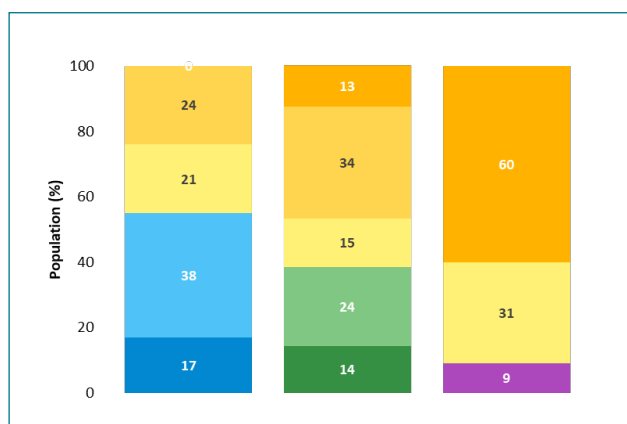
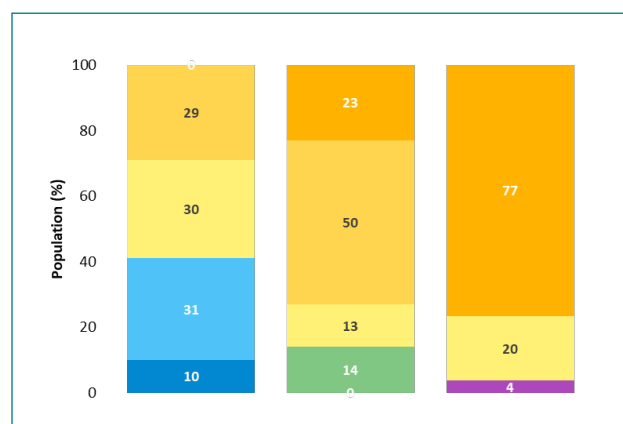
**Bunyangabu****Kabarole**

Figure 19: Service levels in Bunyangabu and Kabarole district.

### 3.5 Global and regional programmes

In 2023, IRC continued to expand its influence beyond the traditional boundaries of water and sanitation, both politically (upwards) and into other areas (climate, finance social justice). Two major global events, the UN 2023 Water Conference and the All Systems Connect symposium were landmarks in collective action towards SDG 6 in 2023.

IRC contributed significantly to the UN 2023 Water Conference supporting the Government of the Netherlands as one of the co-hosts of the **first UN water conference** in 46 years, with the King attending. A specific focus for IRC was promoting high level political engagement. Other joint activities at the conference led to a joint launch later in the year of the Heads of States Initiatives at the Stockholm World Water Week. IRC's role itself was recognised in a commitment submitted by the Government of the Netherlands.

IRC was the host and initiator of All Systems Connect, working closely with key partners the Government of the Netherlands, Water For People (One For All), Sanitation and Water for All, UNICEF, the Agenda for Change, and the Water Finance Coalition. All Systems Connect provided a concrete follow-up from the UN 2023 Water Conference, marking an inflection point in our global movement to rally intersectoral collaboration and accelerate progress.

Conceived as a critical event towards advancing a systems agenda in water, sanitation and hygiene which mobilised the 700 global attendees to The Hague. It extended engagement with wider climate, health, finance, and social justice agendas, was evaluated very positively (4.2 out of 5.0) by partners and participants as motivating and innovative. The communiqué ([www.ircwash.org/news/all-systems-connect-2023-communiqué](http://www.ircwash.org/news/all-systems-connect-2023-communiqué)) from the event guides IRC's work for the coming years, with calls to action for increasing impact.

Inspired by a keynote from Dr Githinji Gitahi of Amref Health, IRC has increased its systematic engagement with leaders in public health, including leading a session on systems thinking for hygiene at the Global Hygiene symposium in December 2023 in Singapore.

Beyond these global events, in the Partnership for WASH Systems in Africa we worked closely with UNICEF to strengthen systems in eight non-focus countries. We launched new training courses with UNICEF, in finance and systems strengthening, which we expect will further boost the growth of the WASH Systems Academy. We expect the partnership to be renewed for a further five years.

In 2023, the **WASH Systems Academy** overall reached 8,000+ users from 125 countries (Table 5), with a completion rate of 31%. Users highly recommended courses (95%), and 85% report practical application within six months. Institutionalisation and scaling up were key areas of focus in 2023. We delivered trainings developed in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, Agenda for Change (Nepal), German WASH Network, WaterAid and Water For People. We continued collaboration with UNICEF,

SIWI, and Water For People and developed new courses in English and French on the UNICEF Agora platform. The courses District planning and Costing sustainable WASH services were launched in Rwanda to train district officers and stakeholders from 10 regions. Additionally, translations enabled broader access in Ethiopia (into Afan Oromo, Amharic languages) and Spanish (via our One For All alliance collaboration in Latin America). Together with WASHNote, IRC began exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for training on WASH systems strengthening.

In 2023, we delivered joint Global and Regional Programmes through an integrated and coordinated plan. At the same time, we operated four separate business units to deliver this plan (and other cross-cutting functions organisation wide): Africa Regional, Asia Regional, Research and Learning, Communications and Influencing. All of these units were successful in mobilising investments that exceeded the planned ambition at the start of the year.

In 2022-23, IRC conducted an organisation-wide mapping to provide insights into how social inclusion is addressed in current WASH programmes, knowledge products and evidence at IRC. This focused on analysing documents on how social inclusion is addressed at IRC as well as conducting interviews with projects and programme heads. An internal report was produced and recommendations from the mapping were shared in a **Global Talk**, such as:

- The D30 strategy and One For All should play a catalysing role in addressing social inclusion.
- Provide evidence-based research on social inclusion with a primary focus on health – use this as an entry point for fundraising.
- Take lessons and actions identified on social justice at the All Systems Connect Symposium, 2023 and integrate them into the overall IRC programming.

Table 5: All the Academy's KPIs show growth or improvement

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	total
#enrollments	235	1239	1325	2282	2807	<b>7888</b>
#completed	106	428	522	714	710	<b>2480</b>
#returners	66	264	180	498	616	<b>1624</b>
%of returners	39%	27%	17%	33%	31%	<b>32%</b>
#countries	32	84	84	78	99	<b>125</b>
%LMIC	38%	34%	77%	92%	86%	<b>76%</b>
%NGO		100%	97%	80%	47%	<b>64%</b>
#courses	0,04	0,1	0,2	0,31	0,31	<b>0,41</b>

Further advancement of this area of work has benefited from a strong [social justice and citizens voice theme](#) and programme and related calls to action formulated at the [All Systems Connect 2023 symposium](#), such as:

- Increase our awareness of how gender, race, class, and power influence the way we act within systems.
- Challenge discrimination by exposing it and prioritising the most vulnerable.
- Include rights organisations in multistakeholder dialogues and include marginalised people in systems strengthening processes.
- Ensure that access to safe water and sanitation is not subject to a person's legality, formality, or documentation.
- Ensure we serve people's material needs (for water, housing, sanitation, a safe environment, health) in a way that respects them and their participation.

These insights are currently being used in the development of strengthened social inclusion programming.

In 2023, over 60 new publications (not counting news items and blogs) have been added to the website, the publications pipeline counts 46 completed resources. Themes range from systems leadership, master planning, to project deliverables. Significant effort was put into producing cyclical outputs (annual, monitoring reports, programme strategies), and into All Systems Connect related knowledge management. Few global think tank outputs have been finalised in 2023. Some are in progress (e.g. national monitoring framework and systems principles paper with UNICEF; All Systems Connect briefing notes; progress reports) and innovations & learning, and publications priorities for 2024 have been conceptualised to guide the year.

The year saw slight growth across all social media platforms (five percent), most notably in our LinkedIn followers (up 20 percent). Overall traffic of our website consisting of 216k users, 16k of which are reoccurring. In the run up to All Systems Connect, our outreach drove 9000+ unique users to the conference site.

## 4. Inputs

### 4.1 Staff and offices

On 31st December 2023, IRC had 104 contracted staff members, including (4) hosted staff members for the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) and the Agenda for Change Secretariat. In addition to a staff group, IRC works with a large group of Associates, consultants, and interns. 34 staff members were contracted in the Global North and 70 staff members were contracted in the Global South. This shows IRC is well ahead on shifting the employment focus to the Global South, which is in line with the planning of the federation structure for OneIRC.

### 4.2 Organisational development

#### STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We believe that safe and secure water and sanitation services are a gateway to justice and opportunity for all people. This truth powers our mission.

We believe in diversity, in our teams and in the actors with whom we engage, as we work towards this mission. We commit to actively reflect, learn, improve, promote and invest in a culture that supports diversity, justice, equity and inclusion.

We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we will strongly advocate and promote the realisation of human rights in all that we do.

We will not engage in or tolerate any breach of human rights by our staff or associates.

#### Developing our organisation

We are aiming to grow, to achieve and to sustain greater and systemic impact across the world. This ambition requires us to better anchor ourselves in the respective societal and institutional systems we need to transform to deliver effective public services that last. In 2022, we initiated a change process of turning ourselves into an international federation of country, regional and global members. Our aim is to launch the OneIRC federation in 2026.

We are already preparing ourselves for this change and testing many of the approaches that we think will make our federation work.

For instance, we believe that the main location of work should not make a difference anymore. Our workforce is increasingly performing work related to their position at a location other than the IRC office that has contracted the staff member.

Starting point for contracting staff who are working in a tax residency different from the contracting office is to ensure equity between IRC staff members (same type of contract with similar conditions for similar work), compliance and limiting costs and risks for both IRC and the staff members. Ensuring a correct payment of social insurances; build-up of pension; applying employment legislation; including regulations around payment during sick leave and the entitlement to (different) Public Holidays. IRC has therefore started the process of using the services of an employer of record for staff members whose main location of work is in a country where IRC has no registered office.

Our global policies at IRC ensure that all IRC offices safeguard shared values and principles, based on diversity, equity and inclusion. Local addendums to these policies represent local law, legislation, and customs.

We acknowledge that working in certain areas around the world poses risks for staff and programmes. While we do our utmost to minimise those risks, a certain level of risk will remain while implementing our mission and mandate. As a result of these considerations, we have developed, in cooperation with the Centre for Safety and Development, a Global Safety and Security Framework. With the intention to:

- Reduce the risk to individual staff members to an acceptable level.
- Enable operational activities under difficult security conditions.
- Support adequate decision making and operational activities in a crisis situation.

Furthermore, within the OFA result framework, we have a separate outcome on “changing ourselves”. This contains indicators on power sharing, JEDI, diversity and GHG emissions. Two aspects are highlighted below, each having a dedicated working group.

### **Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

In line with sector efforts to avoid any damage or harm emerging from unavoidable power imbalances, IRC has embraced the **PSEA framework** as set by UNICEF. Based on a 2022 review, IRC has taken an active approach towards PSEA and improved amongst others the following PSEA elements in our organisation:

- Requirement for all staff to obtain the UNICEF PSEA certificate as a standard element of IRC’s induction programme.
- Availability of Trust Persons and SEA persons for all offices. One member of IRC Africa Regional Team has already attended the UNICEF SEA webinar and is an identified and qualified SEA person for IRC.
- Repeating Global Talks (at last bi-annually) on PSEA and Trust Persons at IRC. All IRC Trust Persons, as well as HR, are trained and qualified.
- HR attended the PARTOS integrity training session in 2023 and co-hosted a Partos Workshop on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in HR.
- Installation of PSEA working group, existing of HR and Growth Hub and the JEDI working group, with the support of the Global Works Council.
- Active referral to PSEA in IRC’s policies and procedures around disciplinary and grievance.
- Review and publication on the website of IRC’s External complaints procedure as well as a “roadmap in reporting wrongdoing at IRC”.
- Improve readability and access to all IRC policies and procedures, by making them available in both English and French.

- A Global Talk is organised by IRC’s Trust Persons, with the ambition to recruit additional Trust Persons in the Country Offices, to expand the number of Trust Persons who can be contacted for PSEA-related matters in the organisation.
- While working towards the OneIRC network with global standards and principles on (staff) protection against PSEA and misbehaviour in general, it is the ambition to ensure that the organisation has (at least) one Global registered in-house mediator, qualified to provide support and mediation internally and externally when wrongdoing is reported.

### Carbon and environment

IRC launched its carbon policy in December 2023 with corresponding [statement](#) and action plan. It is the intention to develop this carbon policy should develop into a wider environmental policy during 2024. We have monitored our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions since 2019, particularly from the Netherlands office and in relation to business travel. While recognising our monitoring can be improved, we can note the following:

- In 2023, GHG emission on travel from NL (scope 3) was 70% of the baseline year of 2019 (149 tons against the baseline of 210 tons).
- In 2023, we were 50% of the 2019 baseline year.
- 9% of trips were recorded to be with train, against 2% in 2019 and 5% in 2022
- Energy usage of new office is order of magnitude less than previous office (2-ton versus 28-ton CO2 equivalent).

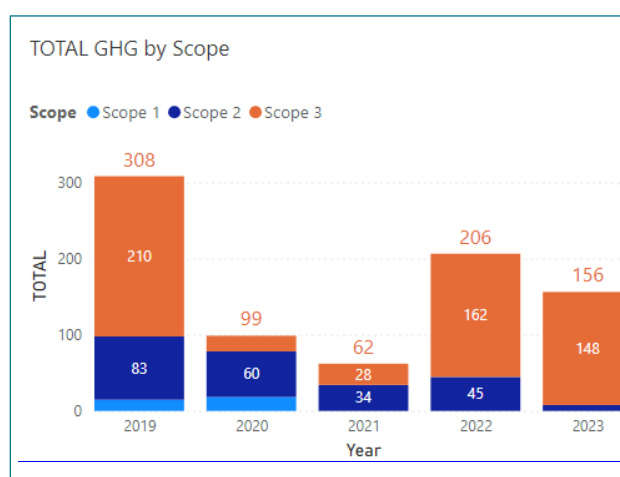


Figure 20: Annual Carbon emissions of IRC in tons CO2 equivalent

### 4.3 Partners and funders

By working effectively together through collective action, we can drive systems change and build resilient local and national WASH systems that will achieve universal access for all by 2030. We are grateful to our partners and funders for helping us get closer to our vision once again this year.



## 4.4 Expenditure and Project Income

DGIS's financial component comprises 12% of the overall financial picture (Table 5). It is the key support in developing new focus countries, acquisition (Growth Hub), making the organisation thrive (Support Hub) and thought leadership (Change Hub). For more information, please see the separate annual financial report.

Table 6: Overview of DGIS financial component

Business unit/programme	Target 2023	Budget 2023	Income through projects 2023	DGIS Programme (%)
Burkina Faso	€ 1,150,000	€ 1,060,000	€ 684,138	€ 73,574 (11%)
Ethiopia	€ 1,150,000	€ 1,302,500	€ 1,505,510	€ 71,253 (5%)
Ghana	€ 1,150,000	€ 2,542,500	€ 2,471,140	€ 75,118 (3%)
Mali	€ 750,000	€ 403,500	€ 370,717	€ 74,588 (20%)
Uganda	€ 1,000,000	€ 1,156,500	€ 930,602	€ 74,921 (8%)
Niger	€ 400,000	€ 250,000	€ 215,594	€ 65,229 (30%)
<b>Total country programmes</b>	<b>€ 5,600,000</b>	<b>€ 6,715,000</b>	<b>€ 6,177,701</b>	<b>€ 434,684 (7%)</b>
Honduras	€ 200,000	€ 148,000	€ 99,824	€ 33,098 (33%)
Rwanda	€ 250,000	€ 346,000	€ 467,066	€ 20,532 (4%)
<b>Total new focus countries</b>	<b>€ 450,000</b>	<b>€ 494,000</b>	<b>€ 566,890</b>	<b>€ 53,630 (9%)</b>
Africa Regional programme	€ 500,000	€ 442,750	€ 888,721	€ 76,119 (9%)
Asia Regional programme	€ 500,000	€ 384,788	€ 299,784	€ 70,777 (24%)
<b>Total regional programmes</b>	<b>€ 1,000,000</b>	<b>€ 827,538</b>	<b>€ 1,188,505</b>	<b>€ 146,896 (12%)</b>
Change Hub	€ 2,650,000	€ 3,096,529	€ 3,686,908	€ 553,772 (15%)
Growth Hub	€ 0	€ 32,500	€ 34,813	€ 34,813 (100%)
Support Hub	€ 500,000	€ 413,750	€ 470,965	€ 211,917 (45%)
Secretariat	€ 300,000	€ 312,500	€ 348,510	€ 51,052 (15%)
<b>Total Netherlands cluster</b>	<b>€ 3,450,000</b>	<b>€ 3,855,279</b>	<b>€ 4,541,196</b>	<b>€ 851,554 (19%)</b>
<b>Total IRC</b>	<b>€ 10,500,000</b>	<b>€ 11,891,817</b>	<b>€ 12,474,292</b>	<b>€ 1,486,762 (12%)</b>

## 5. Conclusions

In 2023, IRC's efforts to strengthen water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems showed notable progress, driven by collaboration with local and national leaders. Key achievements and challenges in IRC's focus countries highlighted systemic changes and the impact of their initiatives. The One For All (OFA) partnership advanced, with global collaboration culminating in the All Systems Connect Symposium and the continued implementation of the Destination 2030 Strategy.

### Key highlights from 2023 include:

**Systems Strengthening:** District-level improvements were notable, though national-level changes were slower due to complexity. Districts are for example often leading the systems strengthening process, with across-the-board improvements in the last five years from 2.3 to 3.3. National level changes are slower from 2.7 to 3.0. due to the complexity of engaging more stakeholders and entrenched systems.

**Program Expansion:** IRC transferred its Honduras program to Water For People and added a new partner district in Burkina Faso. Bangladesh was introduced as a focus country, targeting climate resilience in WASH.

**Service Levels:** Despite challenges, IRC maintained service levels in many areas, though sanitation and hygiene saw slower progress. Improved data collection revealed gaps but also highlighted stability in districts where data was previously collected.

**Innovations:** Introduction of new monitoring methodologies and the WASH Systems Academy, which expanded its global reach, offering new training courses.

**Collaborations:** Strengthened partnerships in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Uganda, focusing on resource mobilization, planning, and legislation.

While significant progress has been made, IRC acknowledges the ongoing challenges, particularly in sanitation and hygiene. We can see clear progress in our systems strengthening, we must remain critical of the limited improvements we have seen in service levels. While Ghana performing well at district and national level, most other countries and partner areas require still a significant shift in progress. This is not surprising, as we acknowledge the difficulty of achieving SDGs. With more complete picture on service level data than previous years, we see the challenge of working in new districts, which impacts any averages. However, setting aside the data challenges, it is clear that low results in sanitation and hygiene continue to challenge us. We aim to drive better collaboration with health to contribute to improvements in 2024, which aligns with our additional focus on institutions under D30.

## Annexes

[Annex 1: One for All Theory of Change Diagram \(PDF\) >](#)

[Annex 2: Programme Scoring and time series data 2017-2023 \(PDF\) >](#)

[Annex 3: Outputs and Activities IRC 2023 \(EXCEL\) >](#)

**We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make access to safe water and sanitation available for everyone, for good. The UN has set a target to achieve this by 2030 – known as Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6).**

### **Resilient systems: the only way**

We know that the only way to achieve this goal is through resilient local and national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems that transform lives. We know how to build and strengthen these systems – but we need to do it now.

It will take everyone, in all parts of the system, changing the way they think and work.

### **Everyone, together**

Each part of a country's WASH system must work effectively: from people using pumps, to monitoring tools, to finance systems. This can only be achieved if everyone in the system knows and plays their part.

Achieving universal access calls for collective action by a broad movement of government, civil society, private sector service providers, financiers, academia and others.

### **Our unique position**

As a change hub, we're in a unique position to unite people to drive and champion change from the ground up. We need to convince district, country and global decision makers of what it'll take to achieve SDG 6.

### **Now is the time**

We need to act now. We're halfway through but not halfway there. We need everyone to commit to massive-scale change – and as you're reading this, that also means you.