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Call for Expression of Interest

Adaptive Learning Initiative for Integrated WASH–Nutrition Programming under ASWA III and No Time to Waste

CEF/USA/2026/017

1 Timeline

Posted	Oct 12, 2026
Clarification Request Deadline	Oct 19, 2026
Application Deadline	Oct 30, 2026
Notification of Results	Nov 19, 2026
Start Date	Nov 30, 2026
End Date	Dec 30, 2027

2 Locations

- A Mali
 - a Gao
- B United States of America
 - a New York
- C Niger
 - a Agadez

3 Sector(s) and area(s) of specialization

- A Education
 - a School meals
- B Food Security
 - a Food assistance
- C Nutrition
 - a Malnutrition prevention and treatment
 - b Micronutrients
 - c Nutrition - general
 - d Nutrition in emergencies
- D WASH and Environment
 - a Basic sanitation

- b Hygiene
- c WASH in emergencies
- d Water

4 Issuing Agency

UNICEF

5 Project Background

The Accelerating Sanitation and Water for All Phase III (ASWA III) programme and the No Time to Waste (NTTW) nutrition programme, both funded by the Government of the Netherlands, are being implemented concurrently in several countries in West and Central Africa through UNICEF. Through an ASWA III top-up contribution from the Government of the Netherlands, UNICEF has been requested to strengthen collaboration between WASH and Nutrition programming in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, including through geographic co-location and stronger joint planning, implementation and monitoring. The initiative builds on UNICEF's global technical guidance on Strengthening Water and Sanitation Systems to Improve Child Nutrition and Development Outcomes, which promotes a transformative WASH approach to improving child nutrition. The approach emphasizes context-specific and risk-informed programming that addresses pathogen exposure pathways and strengthens collaboration between WASH and Nutrition throughout joint programme planning, implementation, monitoring and learning. While the principles of integrated WASH–Nutrition programming are increasingly reflected in global guidance, there remains limited operational evidence on how such programming can be effectively implemented, adapted and institutionalized within different country contexts. Important questions remain regarding how WASH and Nutrition teams work together; how governments coordinate planning, financing and implementation across sectors; how integrated programming can strengthen rather than bypass government systems; how monitoring and data systems can be aligned; and what degree and model of integration is appropriate in different contexts. UNICEF therefore proposes to establish an Adaptive Learning Initiative (ALI) that accompanies programme implementation rather than retrospectively evaluating it. The initiative will embed learning throughout implementation, document country implementation journeys, facilitate regular reflection and adaptive management, and generate practical evidence and operational models for future integrated WASH–Nutrition programming. The initiative will generate learning at three complementary levels: Programme level: understanding how UNICEF WASH and Nutrition teams jointly plan, finance, implement, monitor and adapt programmes and engage partners. Systems level: understanding how government governance, coordination, financing, planning, monitoring, data and institutional capacity support or constrain integrated programming. Global level: synthesizing cross-country learning to inform UNICEF technical guidance, operational tools, advocacy, resource mobilization and future multisectoral programme design. UNICEF seeks to establish a strategic partnership with a university, research institution or consortium with demonstrated expertise in implementation research, systems strengthening, adaptive learning and multisectoral programming, with strong WASH and Nutrition expertise. The selected partner will work closely with UNICEF WASH and Nutrition teams at global and country office level, government counterparts and implementing partners while maintaining sufficient analytical independence to generate objective findings and recommendations.

6 Expected Results

Outcome UNICEF, governments and partners have strengthened evidence, operational learning and practical approaches for designing, implementing, monitoring and institutionalizing integrated WASH–Nutrition programming, contributing to stronger multisectoral systems and improved approaches to addressing the interconnected determinants of child nutrition. Output 1. Country integration and systems contexts understood and documented Baseline conditions for integrated WASH–Nutrition programming are documented in participating countries, including institutional arrangements, programme models, governance and coordination mechanisms, financing, monitoring and data systems, risk-informed programming and opportunities for stronger integration. Activities 1. Develop an inception report, detailed methodology, learning framework, stakeholder engagement approach and data collection tools. 2. Conduct country scoping and systems mapping in participating countries. 3. Map relevant government institutions, UNICEF structures, implementation arrangements, financing mechanisms, monitoring/data systems and coordination mechanisms. 4. Establish an initial assessment of WASH–Nutrition integration against an agreed Integration Maturity Framework. Output 2. Adaptive learning embedded in programme implementation Country teams and government partners have access to timely operational learning that supports adaptive management and continuous strengthening of integrated WASH–Nutrition programming. Activities 1. Establish an embedded adaptive learning process in participating countries. 2. Document implementation journeys, adaptations, innovations, bottlenecks and enabling factors throughout implementation. 3. Facilitate periodic reflection and adaptive learning sessions with UNICEF teams, government counterparts and partners. 4. Generate quarterly learning notes, implementation snapshots and actionable recommendations. 5. Facilitate cross-country learning and exchange between participating countries. 6. Periodically apply the Integration Maturity Framework to assess progress and identify priorities for strengthening integration. Output 3. Evidence generated on operational and systems models for integrated WASH–Nutrition programming Practical evidence is generated on how different approaches to integration function across country contexts and what institutional, operational, financial and technical conditions enable effective integration. Activities 1. Analyse approaches to joint programme planning and implementation. 2. Assess government governance, coordination and



accountability arrangements. 3. Analyse financing, co-location and budgeting approaches. 4. Assess joint monitoring, indicators, information systems, data sharing and use of evidence. 5. Document how pathogen exposure pathways, environmental risks and transformative WASH principles are incorporated into integrated programming. 6. Analyse programme delivery and partnership models at household, community, school, health/nutrition facility, district/municipal and national levels. 7. Identify enabling factors, constraints and opportunities for institutionalization and scale-up. Output 4. Cross-country learning translated into practical operational guidance UNICEF, governments and partners have practical models, tools and recommendations to strengthen future integrated WASH–Nutrition programming and multisectoral systems. Activities 1. Develop country implementation journey case studies. 2. Develop and refine a practical WASH–Nutrition Integration Maturity Framework, covering areas such as governance, planning, financing, programme implementation, monitoring, data systems, risk-informed programming, learning and institutionalization. These dimensions are identified in the TOR as the indicative structure for the framework. TOR WASH Nutrition ALI final 3. Synthesize findings across participating countries. 4. Identify practical operational models appropriate for different contexts and levels of integration. 5. Develop recommendations for strengthening government systems, joint monitoring, data use, financing and institutionalization. 6. Develop a final synthesis report and operational guidance package. 7. Produce evidence, advocacy and communication products to support UNICEF programming, donor engagement and resource mobilization. 8. Facilitate a final dissemination and knowledge exchange workshop with UNICEF, governments, DGIS and partners.

7 Indicative Budget

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8 Other Information

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9 Selection Criteria

Name	Description	Weight
Sector expertise and experience	Demonstrated organizational expertise in WASH, Nutrition, multisectoral programming, systems strengthening and adaptive learning. · Relevant experience in implementation research, evidence generation and translating learning into practical guidance for programme improvement. · Experience collaborating with governments, UN agencies and other partners, preferably in West and Central Africa.	50
Relevance of proposal to achieving expected results	Clear understanding of the ALI objectives and its role in strengthening integrated WASH–Nutrition programming through adaptive learning. · Relevant and feasible approach to supporting country-level learning, reflection and programme adaptation in collaboration with UNICEF and government partners. · Demonstrated comparative advantage in generating and synthesizing operational learning to inform country programming and global guidance.	30
Clarity of activities and expected results	Clear, coherent and feasible proposed methodology and activities that contribute to the expected results of the initiative. · Realistic implementation arrangements, drawing on relevant organizational capacities, partnerships and networks. · Clear approach to engaging stakeholders, facilitating cross-country learning and ensuring findings inform programme improvements.	20

10 Attachments

Description	URL
Annex 1	Download the document here



11 Concept Note Template

[Download the document here](#)

12 For more information on this partnership opportunity, and to apply, please visit

[UN Partner Portal](#)