

UNHCR WASH MANUAL

**Practical Guidance for
Refugee Settings**

UNHCR WASH PROGRAMME GUIDANCE

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UNHCR WASH Manual: Practical Guidance for Refugee Settings
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
CBI	Cash-based intervention
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRC	Free Residual Chlorine
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GBV	Gender-based violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
NFI	Non-Food Item
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RCM	Refugee Coordination Model
TWG	Technical Working Group
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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Introduction

This WASH Manual provides practical guidance on overarching principles that should be considered in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes in forced displacement responses.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services is lifesaving. It is essential for the protection, health, dignity and peaceful coexistence of refugees and their host communities, to ensure that refugees are not left behind in achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#): “clean water and sanitation for all”.

The manual is the starting point for UNHCR staff and WASH partners, experts or practitioners to become acquainted with UNHCR’s approach to WASH programs in forced displacement responses that are valid across different settings.

Introduction

1. UNHCR works to facilitate access to water, sanitation and hygiene services for refugees and their host communities. This work ensures the immediate survival and dignity of people forced to flee, while also helping prevent disease outbreaks and protecting people from gender-based violence.
2. This Manual is one of two complementary components of the UNHCR WASH Guidance:
 - a. UNHCR WASH Programme Guidance Manual. This aims to provide the key protection principles underlying WASH responses, strategic approaches, the response framework and the key indicators and standards to apply in different contexts. It also provides guidance on WASH sector coordination, assessments and monitoring and reporting.
 - b. UNHCR WASH [Key WASH Resources](#), available at [UNHCR WASH](#). This is a set of key documents that provide guidance for water, excreta and solid waste management, disease vector control and hygiene promotion interventions for forced displacement responses with a focus on ensuring an adequate level of basic services.
3. This Manual complements the [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#) and the [Geneva Technical Hub](#).
4. This revision is in response to the convergence of several critical events and trends: the end of COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern, increasing displacement crises with no immediate solutions and the severe effects of climate change on refugee hosting areas. This revision

underscores a strengthened approach towards considering camps as a last resort, emphasizing the necessity of including refugee hosting areas into national systems and plans through collaborations with development actors and the private sector.

Target audience

5. This Manual has been written for use by UNHCR staff, WASH actors, national governmental authorities, emergency response coordinating bodies, development actors, and any individuals or organisations involved in providing WASH services in forced displacement responses.
6. This Manual is relevant for all forced displacement responses, where UNHCR operates in emergency and protracted situations, including in host communities, settlements, collective centres and transit centres. The focus of the manual is on forcibly displaced persons and their host communities but is also relevant and applicable for stateless persons, internally displaced and returnees.

Legal and policy framework for access to water and sanitation

7. This Manual aims to facilitate the achievement of relevant human rights to water and sanitation for all refugees in all settings as enshrined in the resolutions listed below.
8. In 2010 the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council explicitly recognized the human right to [water and sanitation](#). This right is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living as stipulated in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international human rights treaties. Key aspects include:
 - a. Water should be sufficient and continuous to cover personal and domestic uses, which comprise water for drinking, washing clothes, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene.
 - b. Water for drinking and domestic uses should be safe and acceptable to users. It should be free from elements that constitute a threat to a person's health. Water should also be of an acceptable colour, odour, and taste to ensure that individuals will not resort to polluted alternatives.
 - c. Water and sanitation facilities should be physically accessible and within safe reach for all sections of the population, considering the needs of particular groups, including persons with disabilities, women, children and elderly.
 - d. Water services should be affordable to all. No individual or group should be denied access because they cannot afford to pay.
9. In 2021 the Human Rights Council adopted the resolution to recognize the human right to [a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#), including clean air, a safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, safe and sufficient water, and healthy and sustainable food. Key recommendations include:
 - a. Establish or strengthen national air and water quality standards, giving effect to WHO guidelines.

- b. Strengthen regulatory requirements and institutional capacities for solid, liquid and hazardous waste collection, treatment and management, financed by implementation of the polluter pays principle.
10. In 2015 the UN established the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) specifying five areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. In the context of UNHCR WASH programming, these can be translated into the following four objectives:
 - a. **Protection:** Refugees and other forcibly displaced have universal and equitable access to affordable WASH services, which is essential and fundamental for achieving international protection outcomes.
 - b. **Peace:** Host communities benefit from equitable access to improved WASH services alongside refugees to promote peaceful co-existence.
 - c. **Prosperity:** Refugees and host communities benefit from improved economic prosperity/development through improved access to WASH services, creation of livelihood opportunities, and [cash-based interventions](#) to enable them to prioritize and fulfil their WASH needs in a dignified manner and contributes to strengthen the local water, sanitation and hygiene markets where possible.
 - d. **Planet:** WASH activities seek to prevent environmental degradation through sustainable groundwater use, solid waste management, and safe management of the entire sanitation chain, including disposal or recycling of faecal sludge. Acknowledging the impacts of climate change on refugees, many of whom live in some of the most climate-vulnerable areas in the world, WASH responses also consider, mitigate and adapt to climate risks, to the extent possible.
11. The [2030 Agenda](#) also specifies 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 6 is to *'ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all* by year 2030. This focus on universal coverage, *'for all'*, means that forcibly displaced people should be included in national development plans for water and sanitation.
12. In 2018, the UN affirmed the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#). The GCR builds on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#). In the WASH context, the idea behind the GCR and the CRRF is that forcibly displaced people should be included in the communities from the very beginning. States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to strengthen infrastructure and bolster national capacity to address water, sanitation and hygiene challenges. In order to guarantee freedom of movement and fast inclusion, UNHCR discourages the establishment of camps as permanent accommodation solution for forcibly displaced people.
13. The above legal and policy frameworks imply the following:
 - a. Including emergency preparedness among the strategic priorities of WASH programming; identifying WASH capacities in areas likely to be affected by refugee influxes.

- b. Identifying suitable refugee hosting sites within existing villages and towns.
- c. Working with government ministries responsible for water, infrastructure, environment and energy as well as development actors and private sector from the onset of the response.
- d. Identifying existing WASH infrastructure, and assess needs for upgrades, to serve the needs of forcibly displaced people and their hosting communities.
- e. Supporting national WASH authorities and WASH service providers in coordinating the overall WASH response to refugees, while increasing their services to cope with an increased number of users.
- f. Leveraging development action and related financing to invest in WASH system strengthening that benefits refugees and host communities.
- g. Transitioning to household level services where possible to promote ownership and cultivating willingness to pay for WASH services among refugees and host community, considering pro-poor tariffing models.
- h. Focusing on universal and equitable access to safely managed, affordable and sustainable WASH services by adopting cost efficient, climate smart solutions and encouraging inclusion of refugee WASH service provision within national structures.
- i. Aligning humanitarian WASH service provision in accordance with national and local standards.
- j. Where livelihood opportunities exist, introducing revenue collection system (fees to (partially) cover the costs of WASH services provision) that are in line with national practices.

1. UNHCR WASH Protection Principles

Conflict and forced displacement affect different people in different ways due to their age, gender, disability and other diversity characteristics. Some people, such as women, girls, older people, people with disabilities and people from marginalised groups, are often less visible, have less power, and less ability to share their opinions in the community and hence may be less able to participate as others. They may have differing needs, priorities, capacities and vulnerabilities, which will affect the way they can benefit from services and their ability to attain their rights. Therefore, it is important to consider the barriers to their engagement when designing WASH responses.

Introduction

1. WASH programmes for forced displacement responses should take into consideration [UNHCR's protection principles](#). These principles are essential for protection of refugees and to create conditions where refugees can live in safety and with dignity, while fostering peaceful coexistence with their hosting communities. These principles are the basis of WASH Protection Principles below. Additional detail is provided in UNHCR's [WASH, protection and accountability Briefing Paper](#).
 - a. Consultation, participation and accountability
 - b. Equitable access to WASH
 - c. Protection, safety and privacy
 - d. Menstrual hygiene management

Terminologies useful for understanding protection and accountability

2. **Protection:** [Protection](#) encompasses all activities aimed at ensuring the enjoyment, on equal terms of the rights of women, men, girls and boys. UNHCR works in accordance with relevant bodies of law (international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law). It includes interventions by States or UNHCR on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees to ensure that their rights, security, and welfare are recognized and safeguarded in accordance with international standards. Such interventions will, amongst others, be deemed to: ensuring respect for the principle of non-refoulement; promoting admission to safety and access to fair procedures for the determination of refugee status; upholding humane standards of treatment;

realizing the right to assistance and services; promoting non-discrimination, and the implementation of durable solutions.

3. **Accountability:** [Accountability to affected populations \(AAP\)](#) is the commitments and mechanisms that humanitarian agencies have put in place to ensure that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives. It refers to the responsible use of power (resources, decision making) by humanitarian actors, combined with effective and quality programming that recognizes a community's dignity, capacity, and ability to be independent.

Principle 1: Consultation, participation and accountability

Principle 1: *Communities are consulted and participate in the assessment, planning, design, monitoring and maintenance phases of WASH interventions; communication, feedback and response mechanisms are established to enable continued community input throughout the programme cycle. UNHCR's [Age, gender and diversity \(AGD\)](#) policy seeks to ensure that all forcibly displaced people fully participate in these processes.*

Rationale:

4. UNHCR supports community-based participatory approaches, which seek to facilitate the meaningful participation of affected people in assessment, planning and monitoring processes and, therefore, decisions that affect their lives. Involving people with differing needs, priorities, capacities and vulnerabilities in the design of WASH programmes has multiple benefits:
- It recognises the value that refugees themselves bring to the process and increases their well-being and sense of dignity.
 - It contributes to the effectiveness of the interventions as the involvement of a diverse group of refugees means that the final result is more likely to meet their needs.
 - It results in an increased sense of ownership, satisfaction, and improves the level of use and responsibility taken for long term maintenance.
 - Ensuring that every affected person can access the information on their rights, entitlements and the good behaviours of staff in a way that they can understand, is particularly important in relation to the [Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation \(PSEA\)](#).
 - It contributes to increasing empowerment and equality between diverse individuals.
 - It helps to ensure that more people can attain their rights and can live healthy, safe and dignified lives.
 - If the refugee population is not involved in the planning of services, then the likely outcome will be avoidance, misuse or vandalism of the WASH services and infrastructure.
5. Consultation and participation of individuals and groups across different [AGD groups](#) in the forcibly displaced and host communities is key to the implementation of this principle.

6. Different approaches may be required to meaningful engagement with specific AGD groups, such as children, older persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, minorities and indigenous people.
7. The key components of [AAP](#) are intrinsically linked and built on each other and other community based participatory approaches. These components can be used throughout the WASH programme cycle.

Table 1 identifies key actions that support consultation, participation and accountability to refugees across the project cycle.

Table 1: Key actions to involve forcibly displaced throughout the project cycle

<p>Assessment: Gather and systematically analyze age, gender and diversity disaggregated data and information. Identify the AGD characteristics that are relevant and need to be available as an evidence base to inform AGD-inclusive programming.</p>
<p>Design: Forcibly displaced and host community, particularly women and girls and people with specific needs, should be involved in the process of designing WASH facilities and services as soon as people have arrived.</p>
<p>Implementation: Where possible forcibly displaced people should be involved in the process of construction and operation of communal and/or their household-level WASH facilities.</p>
<p>Maintenance and monitoring: To the extent possible, forcibly displaced people should be involved in the routine maintenance and monitoring of WASH facilities.</p>



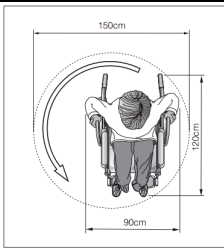
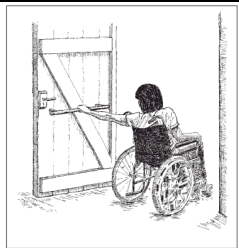
Principle 2: Equitable access to WASH

Principle 2: *Access to WASH infrastructure, information and services is equitable and considers requirements for persons with specific needs /vulnerabilities.*

Rationale:

8. Equitable and universal access to WASH facilities and services is critical for survival, enhanced protection, well-being and dignity of refugees and to achieve public health objectives. WASH facilities should be accessed and used comfortably by all including children, older persons, persons with disability and mobility issues, [LGBTIQ+](#) persons, and minorities and indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is important that steps are taken to understand why sections of the refugee population may be at risk of inequitable access to WASH services and what can be done to ensure WASH facilities and services are accessible to all. Furthermore, it is important that WASH service levels also take into consideration levels of access of the host population to avoid potential conflict and resource competition. Table 2 identifies key actions that support this principle.

Table 2: Key actions to support the principle of equitable access to WASH

Key actions			
<p>1. Household facilities should be prioritized wherever possible. Access is improved in all situations by constructing WASH facilities closer to the user. This means wherever technically feasible, <u>household level solutions should always be favored over communal facilities</u>. In some cases where appropriate it may be possible to provide WASH facilities within the home, especially when this is culturally more appropriate.</p>			
<p>2. Children and their parents/carers should be involved in identifying NFI needs (potties, scoops, re-usable cloth nappies, etc) and assessing options for designs for toilets, bathing facilities and water collection points to suit children¹.</p>			
<p>3. Work with people with disabilities, their carers, older people, pregnant women and others with specific needs – all of whom may have limitations on their mobility. They should be proactively involved in designing toilets, bathing facilities, water points and laundry facilities that they and other people with mobility limitations can easily access². Also involve health staff in designing accessible facilities in health facilities. A range of adaptations may be useful such as increased size in the unit, adding a cleanable seat, handrails, ramp with resting platforms, larger locks and door widths.</p>			
<p>4. Consider different groups when designing hygiene promotion activities. Use a variety of communication channels, learning methods and media to include people with sight or hearing issues.</p>			
<p>5. Consider the needs of different people when distributing non-food items (for example a fast lane for older people, people with disabilities and other people who may be particularly vulnerable, may assist collection quicker and more safely)³.</p>			
Examples of toilets made accessible for people with disabilities or other mobility limitations (Jones and Reed, 2005)			
 <p>Commode chair with strap and ring for comfort</p>	 <p>Handrails for squat latrine</p>	 <p>Ensuring space for turning</p>	 <p>Easy grip door handles</p>

¹ [Ferron, S., & Lloyd, A \(2014\)](#)

² [Jones, H.E., & Reed, R.A. \(2005\)](#)

³ [Help Age \(2015\)](#)

Principle 3: Protection, safety and privacy

Principle 3: *Protection, safety and privacy considerations are integrated into WASH programmes, designs and services.*

Rationale:

9. **Protection:** [Gender-based violence \(GBV\)](#) refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. Women and girls are disproportionately affected everywhere and are at heightened risks. Forcibly displaced people are at-risk of GBV, irrespective of their age, gender or diversity considerations. Whilst poor access to WASH is not the 'root cause' of violence, it can be a community-level contributing factor. For example, if women feel that they have to use facilities after dark or go to remote areas for washing their clothes (e.g. in a river), both of which increase opportunities for violence to occur without others seeing¹. Some practical guidelines are provided by [the 2015 Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) guidelines for integrating GBV interventions in Humanitarian action](#). The types of violence that are of most relevance to WASH include:
 - a. Social discrimination and exclusion
 - b. Sexual assault
 - c. Lack of access to education
10. UNHCR's [GBV Safety Audit Toolkit](#) provides participatory methodologies designed to identify and understand the safety concerns related to GBV risks relevant to WASH facilities.
11. **Safety:** In addition, people can also be injured by inadequate design or unsafe construction of facilities, such as through sharp edges, slippery floors, collapsing pit latrines, or contact with hazardous wastes. Care should be taken during WASH facility design and construction to adequately protect users from accidents. Additional guidance is provided in UNHCR's [Safe and Secure Settlements](#).
12. **Privacy:** Privacy should be an important consideration in the design of toilets and bath shelters and has a direct link to reduction of GBV.
13. Consult members of the community to understand the perceived protection, safety and privacy concerns and agree on appropriate risk mitigation measures.

Table 3 describes key actions that support this principle. Table 4 lists features of WASH facilities which can contribute to feelings of privacy and safety. Useful considerations and tips for these actions and supporting case studies refer to the [WASH, Protection and Accountability Briefing Paper](#).

¹ [House, S., Ferron, S., Sommer, M., & Cavill, S. \(2014\)](#)

Table 3: Key actions supporting the principles of protection, safety and privacy

Key actions
<p>1. The persons we serve should be consulted and involved in decisions on their needs, designs and locations of facilities at the earliest stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, girls and other persons with specific needs should be involved in this process. It is essential when designing facilities to take into consideration issues related to privacy, safety and usability. • Do not assume that persons with specific needs are visible; actively and safely identify them, if need be, in consultation with protection colleagues.
<p>2. Men and boys should be involved in discussions on their feelings of safety and that of their families when using WASH facilities and should be involved in processes to support the protection of women, girls and boys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys can also be vulnerable to GBV and need to feel safe when using WASH facilities; involving them in solutions also has the potential to contribute to reducing the root cause of violence.
<p>3. Ask for feedback on the ‘usability’ of facilities and ‘feelings of safety’, so that modifications can be made where problems are being faced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst asking about ‘feelings of safety’ is useful and appropriate, WASH staff themselves should not be asking about actual incidents of violence or for details of what happened¹. • If incidents of violence are mentioned during discussions, the information should be kept confidential and discretely shared with a protection colleague who will use standard procedures in line with protection ethics to respond. People can be put at further risk if incidents of GBV against them become common knowledge.
<p>4. People with specific needs should be prioritized for WASH services. Ask for protection colleagues to assist with consulting with people from particularly vulnerable groups as to their concerns and solutions for WASH. In particular, request them to discretely consult with people who are LGBTIQ+ to identify any concerns they may have about using WASH facilities and possible solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are LGBTIQ+ or people from other particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups can face increased risks of discrimination or violence if information about them is not handled appropriately. Hence it is essential to work with the leadership of protection colleagues when determining their needs. • The best solution for most vulnerable groups is likely to be household level toilets and bathing facilities. If communal facilities are unavoidable, then ensure that accessible gender-neutral unisex toilets are also provided as well as gender-segregated facilities and that these are in well-lit areas.
<p>5. WASH facilities should comply with national standards and host services should not be over-burdened and interventions should aim to reduce risks of conflict over limited resources.</p>
<p>Important note on the need for more learning across contexts: Much more learning is needed in the area of what features can make facilities more user-friendly, safer and provide adequate privacy. Consultation, discussion and feedback are needed with the users, including women, girls and other at-risk groups.</p>

¹ [House, S. et al \(2014\)](#)

Table 4: Key design features for WASH facilities which have the potential to contribute to feelings of privacy and safety

1. **Household toilet and bathing facilities should be prioritized.** If not possible then support facilities shared by a max. of 2-3 families.
2. **Communal toilets/bathing facilities should always be gender-segregated,** with clear signage for women and men.
3. **Accessible and gender-neutral units** should be supported. If gender-segregated communal toilet / bathing facilities are supported, it is also good practice to include several larger wheel-chair accessible ‘gender-neutral’ units that can be used by either males or females. These can be used by people with mobility limitations, mothers with small children and people with diverse gender identities who may face abuse or harassment using gender-segregated facilities.
4. **Internal locks** should be included on door for all toilet and bathing units (communal/shared/household).
5. **WASH facilities should be designed in a manner that ensures privacy.** In particular, consult women and adolescent girls for design of privacy features for toilets and showers, such as wall heights, appropriate screening, and wall materials selection. Considerations include:
 - Doors and walls should be solid, reach the ground and be of sufficient height.
 - Where walls are made of cloth or plastic, it should not be easy to poke holes through the material.
6. **Appropriate lighting should be provided for latrines and bathing units,** for both female and male users so that they can be used during the hours of darkness.
 - Consider how lighting could be deployed to lower the risk of GBV, in agreement with the facilities’ users.
 - Discuss the placement of lights with members of the community, including speaking to different AGD groups separately, especially women and girls or other groups who may have threats to their safety.
 - In addition, plan to provide at least one solar lamp per family.
7. **Design should aim to reduce risk of physical injury** from sharp objects, slipping or the presence of hazardous wastes. Ensure that emergency toilet slabs are stable. The decay of timber is a common problem in emergency toilets that can cause people to fall into toilet pits.
8. **WASH facilities should be located in safe areas.** Consult on feelings of safety to establish the perceived safety of different areas and agree on preferred locations.



Photos: Emergency Showers (right) where users installed their own privacy barrier.
(Photos: Coloni, F/UNHCR)

Principle 4: Menstrual hygiene management and incontinence

Principle 4: *The needs of women, girls and other people who menstruate and people with incontinence to manage their hygiene confidently, in privacy and with dignity are integrated into WASH responses.*

Rationale:

14. **Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)**²: Women and girls menstruate for about half their lives, from about the age of 10 to 19 (menarche) until their late forties or fifties (menopause). Menstruation is a natural process that is a healthy part of the reproductive cycle and which is central to life itself. But it is also a process that in almost all contexts around the world often leads to feelings of embarrassment, stress and shame. The blood needs to be managed through appropriate sanitation and hygiene. This means having materials to adequately soak the blood; and the girl and woman needs access to appropriate WASH facilities to change menstrual materials, wash and dry themselves, and soak, wash, dry or dispose of used materials. Girls and women may lose their usual coping mechanisms for managing their menses in displacement situations and may have to live in close contact with male relatives and sometimes strangers with limited privacy which adds additional challenges.
15. Women and girls also need opportunities to discuss menstrual hygiene and build their confidence in managing their menses effectively. Menstruation and MHM often have a range of taboos associated with it, some of which are not problematic, but some that are. This includes women or girls believing they should not wash / bathe during part or all of their menstrual cycle as they are fearful of negative implications (such as becoming infertile, sick, going insane or dying). A range of practices or restrictions also exist, which vary between people of different backgrounds and cultures.
16. Comprehensive guidance on integration of MHM in existing programming can be found in the Menstrual hygiene in emergencies Toolkit.³

The High Commissioner's commitment to supporting menstrual hygiene:

*'The provision of sanitary materials to **all** women and girls of concern will become standard practice in all UNHCR assistance programs. This is central to women's dignity and health.'*

The commitment is to provide:

- Either absorbent cotton material (4 square meters/year) or disposable napkins (12/month).
- Underwear (6/year).
- Soap (250g/month) – *in addition to the general soap distribution to all affected persons.*

² [House, S. et al. \(2012\)](#)

³ [Columbia University & International Rescue Committee \(2017\)](#)

17. **Incontinence:** As per the [WASH Incontinence Factsheet](#), incontinence is where a person is not able to hold onto (or control) their urine (pee) or faeces (poo), or both. A wide range of people may live with incontinence, including older people, adults and children with physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties, women and adolescent girls who are pregnant or who have given birth, people who have suffered from a sexual assault and people with certain medical conditions (e.g. enlarged prostate, diabetes, uterus prolapse).
18. People with incontinence may suffer from stigma, embarrassment or loss of self-esteem and it may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. They may be unable or excluded from accessing basic services such as water. The practice implications for people with incontinence include:
- ◆ Significantly increased need for water supply and soap and accessible WASH facilities (toilets, bathing spaces, laundry areas).
 - ◆ Incontinence items and materials, such as incontinence diapers.
19. Comprehensive guidance on how to integrate support to people with incontinence into WASH responses can be found in the [WASH Incontinence Factsheet](#). Table 5 identifies key actions that support this principle.

Table 5: Key actions which support MHM and incontinence in refugee settings

Key actions
1. Consult with women and girls and other people who menstruate and people with incontinence on including those with disabilities, on their needs and preferences for support.
2. Learn about the practices, norms and beliefs associated with MHM and incontinence in each society. This can help to counteract harmful practices and to establish the most appropriate support.
3. Provide culturally and age appropriate menstrual hygiene or incontinence materials. Preferences may vary. It is essential to ensure both appropriate types of materials as well as the required numbers of pieces. Materials should be provided per person and not per family and should consider needs over time. Prioritize Cash Based Interventions (CBI) to meet needs more flexibly.
4. Provide additional non-food items that support the management of menstruation and incontinence , such as small buckets and lids, underwear, washing line and pegs and additional soap ¹ . Prioritize Cash Based Interventions to meet needs more flexibly.
5. Ensure facilities that enable private, dignified and user-friendly changing of menstrual hygiene or incontinence materials. It is critical to ensure that users are involved in the design. Usability features can include: easy access to water supply; provision of hooks to hang up possessions to have hands free; inclusion of small shelves on which to put pads, soap and other items; and the provision of a three quarter length mirror to check for stains and for dignity.
6. Ensure options are available for the soaking, washing, drying and disposal of sanitary protection or incontinence materials. This may require installing collection buckets in each toilet and bathing unit cubicle, but it should then have a system for the sustainable and discrete transfer of the materials to end disposal and training and safety equipment for those handling the bloody wastes.
7. Provide information and opportunities for girls and women and those with incontinence to discuss good practices. Also consider opportunities for others to learn about these topics and how to support women, girls and people with incontinence.
8. Provide capacity and confidence building for male and female staff, teachers, health staff and other actors on menstrual hygiene and incontinence.
9. Undertake post distribution monitoring for both gift-in-kind and CBI modalities and adjust future activities accordingly.

¹The [UNHCR standard](#) is at least 450 grams of soap per person per month (personal hygiene-250g; laundry/other-200g). Women and girls should be provided with an additional 250g per month for menstrual hygiene management.

2. WASH Strategic Approaches, Response Framework and Standards

UNHCR WASH responses are often triggered during emergencies, when the capacity of local service providers is insufficient to respond to the sudden needs of forcibly displaced people. While initially WASH programs tend to be life-saving, more sustainable solutions need to be identified, avoiding parallel systems managed by humanitarian actors, including UNHCR. In response to the growing scale and complexity of forced displacement, compounded by state fragility, poverty and climate change, at the earliest stages UNHCR WASH programs should link to national and local development plans, seeking complementarity with and transitioning to development-supported services. These programs are generally more cost-effective, have greater sustainability and provide an additional opportunity to strengthen existing WASH systems when host-communities are under-resourced.

WASH programs should be developed in a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach considering the UNHCR principles of refugee protection, and sustainable response approaches, and then reflected in the operation's multi-year strategy.

Global WASH Strategic approach

1. UNHCR's strategic approach to WASH programming focuses on meeting the lifesaving needs of forcibly displaced people and their hosting communities through a cross-sectoral and interagency response.
2. This is underpinned by the inclusion principle – inclusion of refugees in national WASH systems, striving to transition from lifesaving to sustainable and inclusive WASH service delivery.
3. Further, UNHCR **plays a catalytic role** amongst a wider group of stakeholders to more comprehensively support, strengthen and ease the burden on host-governments, in line with the vision articulated in UNHCR's [Global Compact on Refugees](#).
4. Four objectives guide this approach:
 - a. Meet the life-saving WASH needs of refugees and other persons of concern in emergencies.

- b. Promote and support sustainable WASH service planning and development engagement from the outset of responses.
- c. Proactively mainstream climate resilience and environmental sustainability throughout all WASH response phases.
- d. Strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration for improved WASH, settlement planning, shelter and housing, protection, health, and education outcomes.

Sustainable responses and inclusion in national systems

- 5. In line with the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), sustainable WASH responses (unpublished, internal only) aim to contribute to self-reliance and access to basic rights through greater and faster inclusion of areas hosting forcibly displaced and stateless people in the local or national WASH systems, earlier and more predictable development assistance in hosting areas, and enhanced whole-of-government leadership.

Guiding Principles:

- 6. **Inclusion and Equity:** Uphold UNHCR’s commitment to advancing towards principles of inclusion, equity, accessibility and affordability to support access to water, sanitation and hygiene, to ensure that refugees are not left behind in achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#): “clean water and sanitation for all”.
- 7. **Protection and Resilience:** Reinforce UNHCR’s lifesaving protection and assistance mandate and recognize the rights to [water, sanitation](#) and [a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#) are essential for the protection, health, dignity and peaceful coexistence of refugees and their host communities.
- 8. **Partnerships and Solutions:** Invest in strategic multistakeholder partnerships, promoting responsibility sharing and multisectoral approaches to ensure dignified and healthy futures.

Pillars of Sustainable WASH Responses:

- 9. **Enabling national policies, plans, systems, and multiyear strategies** should take account of forcibly displaced people and the areas hosting them, including in National Development Plans (NDPs) and national disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies (with their corresponding national and local emergency preparedness plans, early warning systems, national anticipatory actions etc) and their budgets.
- 10. **Inclusion from the start during the emergency phase and beyond**
 - a. *During emergencies, immediate, life-saving assistance should be reliably provided.* Supported by humanitarian and development actors if needed, governments lead on these responses. Where national or local systems exist, new arrivals should be able to access services from these systems. Where building on existing local or national systems is not possible, clear transition strategies should be designed into the new emergency systems.
 - b. *It is essential to acknowledge that these systems may require additional strengthening and support to enhance their capacities.* Consideration should be given to the water resources, infrastructure and governance

(policy and strategy, institutional arrangements, financing, planning/monitoring, and capacity development) and system users (policymakers, service providers and water consumers)⁴.

- c. *Transition to the higher standards should be prioritized as the response progresses, with development support.* This may include transitioning from community to household ownership of facilities, or to locally operated and maintained community systems.

Transition plans should be developed in collaboration with all stakeholders and should include the activities to strengthen the system, a timeline, the targeted increase in standards throughout the plan and allocate responsibilities to stakeholders.

- d. *Handover to local service providers should be prioritized.* Handover plans should allow for allocation of the area or system by the national authorities (gazetting) and inclusion into national plans, a preparation phase, with considerations of land rights, infrastructural improvements before handover, tariff and payment agreements, etc, a realistic timeline for handover, responsibilities during and after transfer, a handover phase and contingency plans.
- e. *CBI, such as multi-purpose cash, should be prioritized where markets and user-pays systems exist (such as water kiosks, water vendors etc).* Where forcibly displaced people are included in the national socio-economic system, facilitating their legal registration, rights to work etc, equitable tariff structures in line with national and local norms should be considered.

11. Community engagement:

- a. *Ensure regular, effective, and strategic engagement among all stakeholders, particularly by involving refugees and their host communities.*
- b. *Focus on understanding the needs and challenges refugees may have with accessing local or national services and build community understanding and engagement of the options available to them.*
- c. *Understanding ability and willingness to pay is essential where user-pays system exist or preceding their introduction.*

Box 1: System strengthening

The **level of support** required depends on the capacity of the existing system compared to the requirements of the displaced population. Several scenarios exist:

- a. The system is able to provide services to the national or local standard for the host community but is not able to support the additional displaced population.
- b. The system is not able to provide services to the national or local standard for the host community. The additional displaced population further impacts on the capacity of this system to deliver services.
- c. The system is able to provide services to national or local standard to the host community and the additional displaced population, however extreme weather events (such as drought or floods) or health outbreaks have impacted on this capacity.

⁴ [UNICEF WASH systems strengthening: framework](#) (UNICEF, 2025)

- d. *Where conditions for equity or affordability do not exist, consider additional support such as advocacy for lower tariffs, provision of multi-purpose cash or provision of water directly to vulnerable populations.*
- e. *Community managed systems, professional development, certification, and inclusion of refugees in service delivery alongside the host community is key to building on the existing skills of refugees to enhance resilience and socio-economic dividends.*

20. **Responsibility sharing and financing:**

- a. *Leveraging development actors* should target support to strengthen existing local or national WASH systems, transition to local host or national standards or away from parallel systems to local service providers, as quickly as possible. Engagement should also target advocacy for improved services to underserved areas in the host community (if any). Supporting access by refugees to improved livelihoods or socio-economic inclusion can improve ability and willingness to pay for WASH services. Existing partnerships such as with UNICEF and KfW demonstrate the strength of this approach and the benefits and drivers for expanding it.
- b. *Collaboration with private sector* can improve accessibility or affordability of WASH services to refugee populations and can support the supply chain to ensure that WASH systems can be maintained through local markets.
- c. *Evidence informed programming, capacity and monitoring of affordability, accessibility, quality of services and residual protection risks after handovers* will be required to achieve the desired outcomes.

21. **Risks:**

Where WASH responses are not implemented with a sustainable response lens, risks may include:

- a. *Establish parallel systems* that are not sustainable in the long term when managed by humanitarian actors.
- b. *Create dependency by users on external support*, which is usually provided for free. Exit strategies from such systems are difficult to develop to align with user-pays systems in the host communities.
- c. *Negative coping strategies*, such as using unsafe water collected through long journeys with high personal risks, may be the last resort for vulnerable people if well-planned handover/exit plans are not developed.

Box 2: Case studies

Lessons learned from UNHCR and World Bank [Transitions in Uganda](#) include the need for strengthening of national utilities, quality assurance of systems to be handed over to ensure that the system can meet national standards and user fees to sustain water systems.

[R-WASH in East Africa](#) analyses demonstrate cost savings, improved health, alleviation of conflict and improved service maintenance. Key findings highlight the need for resilient infrastructure supported by relevant policy changes at national and sub-national levels, conflict sensitive and peace building approaches, predictable funding and sustained financing and subsidies.

UNHCR WASH Response Programme Framework

22. The WASH response should be guided by the UNHCR WASH Response Programme Framework, as in Figure 1, and in UNHCR's [WASH in Emergencies](#). These phases are indicative only and should be tailored based on the context (cultural preferences, existing infrastructures, urban/dispersed settings, etc.).
23. UNHCR recognises three main phases of responses to forced displacement, based on accessibility of services: the short-term emergency response, a transition phase and the longer-term response. These are not mandatory phases. In some cases, existing infrastructure and systems will already be aligned (or close to) the transition or longer term (basic service) levels. Moving through these phases is only valid in responses where longer-term systems are not already established. If they are established, emergency responses need to move to longer term levels as fast as possible, to avoid health and environmental issues, and boost sustainability of operations of WASH systems. Table 6 provides sample activities under each of these phases.

Emergency Response (short term)

24. This phase is during the initial population influx, during which the WASH life-saving needs must be met. The two situations below would determine the standard of humanitarian WASH response:
- ◆ Where the actual service of the national WASH system meets the national and UNHCR's emergency standards, and it has sufficient capacity to absorb additional users (eg urban areas). The emergency WASH response will be an integrated part of the existing national WASH system and refugees will immediately have access to the same standard of service as the host community.
 - ◆ Where there is insufficient capacity in the national WASH system, the emergency WASH response will initially target as a minimum, UNHCR's emergency standards. The emergency response will involve (preferentially) upgrading or strengthening this system or establishing new systems to provide the life-saving needs. In this situation, advocacy for development action to support improved services to underserved areas in the host community (if any) should also be prioritized.

Transition towards longer term solution

25. Once the population has stabilized, or life-saving needs have been met, the response should transition to longer-term WASH systems as below. If the population is not already within the host community or not already accessing services at national standards, this is the phase where there will be continued strengthening or upgrades of the system with increased household ownership and improved integration with existing national WASH service provision structures.
26. Where parallel systems have been developed and will be handed over to local utilities, the handover process may include the following:

- a. Allocation of the area or system by the national authorities (gazetting) and inclusion into national plans.
- b. A preparation phase, which may include joint assessments of the system, stakeholder engagement, formation of a steering committee and considerations of the following:
 - ◆ Land rights
 - ◆ Infrastructural improvements before handover
 - ◆ Abstraction permits
 - ◆ Tariff and payment agreements
 - ◆ Arrangements for people with specific needs
 - ◆ Grace period
 - ◆ Staff composition
 - ◆ Application for connection procedures
 - ◆ Realistic timeline for handover
 - ◆ Responsibilities during and after transfer.
- c. A handover phase, which may include implementation of agreements and infrastructure improvements identified in the preparation phase, development of a long-term budgeting plan, development of the workforce etc. A grace period may be allowed for resolution by the humanitarian/development partners of problems identified by the receiving agent.
- d. Contingency plans.
- e. Long-term plans for utility operation, including customer care, complaints resolution, monitoring, extension modalities should be developed by the utility prior (with the support of development partners, as required) to take over.

Basic (longer term)

27. Where there is inadequate capacity in the national WASH system, works will have been undertaken to upgrade or strengthen the existing system or develop new systems in the emergency and transition phases. These works should have targeted at least basic standards or services.
28. Basic services are defined by [specific criteria](#) for households in the [Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene](#):
 - a. Drinking water: Drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a round trip, including queuing.
 - b. Sanitation: Use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households.
 - c. Hygiene: Availability of a handwashing facility on premises with soap and water.
29. Many refugee situations become long term, protracted situations. The definition used by UNHCR for a [protracted refugee](#) situation is ‘*a refugee situation in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in a given asylum country*’. Based on this

definition, an estimated 25 million refugees and other people in need of international protection were in a protracted situation mid-2024⁵. This represents 66% of all refugees under UNHCR’s mandate and highlights the need to focus on transitioning to national systems to provide long-term cost-efficient WASH provision for refugees.

30. If parallel systems were established in the emergency response phase, these will be upgraded into sustainable long-term systems or safely decommissioned by this phase.

Box 3: Sustainable WASH Responses: which standards to apply

UNHCR’s sustainable response approach emphasizes the importance of aligning humanitarian operations with national and local systems, avoiding parallel services to the extent possible, and aiming at an early transition of humanitarian programs onto national and local ones. Such guiding principles contribute to both short-term and long-term sustainability.

Nonetheless, differences between humanitarian standards, national standards and actual local service levels can complicate service delivery and smooth transition between humanitarian action and inclusion in national systems:

- The table below with the national standards for several of the larger WASH responses highlights that these are universally higher than the humanitarian standard of 15 litres per person per day (lppd).
- Further, the reality on ground is that national standards may not be met in underserved areas of the host community, with local service levels for the hosting community below the national standards.
- In some situations, the local service levels for the host community may also be lower than humanitarian standards.

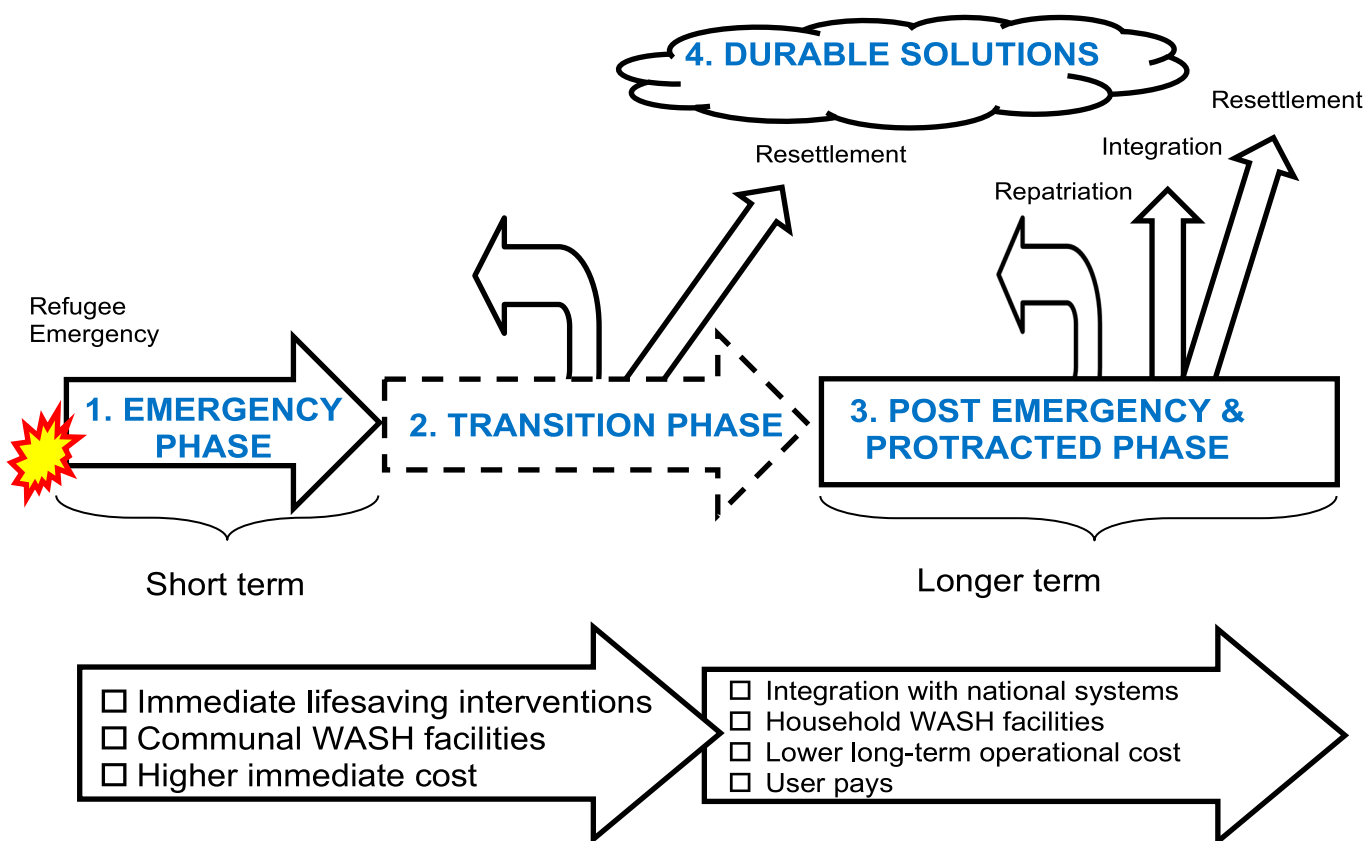
It is, therefore, recommended to adjust humanitarian standards to fit local contexts and ensure compatibility with national conditions without compromising safety and life-saving needs. Agreeing upon a common standard should be the result of collaboration between the forcibly displaced population, host community and the local authorities and service providers to ensure equity and peaceful coexistence. The below prioritization logic can help to establish which standards to apply:

1. Standards should target, as a minimum, UNHCR standards, existing service levels within the local host community or national standards, whichever are lowest.
2. As the response progresses, service levels should progress to the higher level, with the support of development actors.
3. In the event of public health outbreaks or where tensions around access to water are high, UNHCR’s standards should be directly targeted.

Country	National water supply standard (lppd)
Bangladesh	20
Chad	Rural: 15 – 20
Ethiopia	Rural: 25/Urban: 50 +
Iraq	250
Nigeria	30
Rwanda	Rural: 20
Sudan	Rural: 25/Urban: 100
Uganda	20
Zambia	40

⁵ Data and statistics. Mid-Year Trends. <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends> [accessed 24 October 2025]

Figure 1: Overview of UNHCR WASH Priorities by Phase



Emergency Phase

- Saving lives / reducing transmission of diseases of public health importance.
- Providing immediate access to essential WASH services.
- Identification of suitable settlement options and locations
- Close monitoring of WASH service provision and rates of scale up.
- Full refugee participation in the design and provision of WASH services.
- Support to national/local WASH authorities and service providers.
- Service delivery at lowest of national standard, existing service levels or emergency standards.
- Leverage development action for system strengthening.
- Develop clear exit strategies.
- Cash based interventions, where conditions exist.

Transition Phase

- Transition to cost-efficient services with reduced reliance on fuel, energy, chemicals and expertise.
- Strengthening of national WASH authorities and WASH service providers.
- Capacity building of refugee community-based organisations.
- Increased level of service delivery, including possible transition to household toilets and bathing facilities.
- Monitoring of WASH services.
- Reduce WASH protection risks.
- Implementation of exit strategies through development action.
- Cash based interventions, where conditions exist.

Post Emergency & Protracted

- Service provision to national WASH strategies and policies.
- Handover of responsibility for WASH service provision to refugee community-based organisations and national WASH authorities and service providers.
- Revenue collection if refugee livelihood opportunities exist (fees collected to cover the costs of WASH services).
- Monitoring of WASH services.
- Reduce WASH protection risks.
- Service delivery at highest of national standard, existing service levels or emergency standards.

Table 6: Indicative activities for emergency, transition and long-term phases of a WASH response

Time Period	Emergency Response – Short Term	Transition toward longer term solutions	Basic - Longer Term
Water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottled water at border crossing points <u>if unavoidable</u> • Water trucking <u>only if unavoidable</u> • Hydrogeological campaign to drill new boreholes (if needed) • Surface source and treatment • Tubewells • Emergency bladders and/or elevated tank • Emergency tap stand • Temporary piped water networks with flexible lay flat hose • Aquatabs/PUR/HTH chlorine • Distribution of jerrycan 20L rigid • Distribution of bucket with lid/tap • Water dispensers (urban) • CBI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension/upgrades of emergency water network, including upgrades in materials, such as PE pipes • Accommodation plumbing upgrades • Handpumps • Elevated water storage tower • Creation of main water pipe system for future more reticulated systems • CBI to cover water items (jerrycans, water filters, etc.), water bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pipe network (reinforcements or extensions) • Community level water treatment • Elevated water storage tower • Public water points • Rainwater harvesting • Renewable energy for motorized water systems • Refilling taps connected to municipal water supply (urban) • CBI to cover water items (jerrycans etc.), water treatment systems at household level, water bills
Sanitation, excreta and wastewater management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trench toilets with privacy screens (if culturally acceptable and if no other solutions can be provided rapidly) • Portable/desludgable toilets (elevated if needed, eg in rocky/impermeable soils) • Daily cleaning/maintenance • Plastic toilet slab • Toilet digging kits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase toilet coverage by commencing household toilet programme, initially with one toilet shared between four families (1:20) and improving to one per household • Drainage upgrades • On or off-site desludging/wastewater disposal systems • Accommodation plumbing upgrades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic pit toilet dome slab • Pour flush toilet if requested by the context • Flush toilets installed in prefabricated buildings/containers, or other suitable structures (urban) • CBI • Sewerage systems • Wastewater treatment and disposal systems upgrades

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage/soak pits for wastewater management 		
Handwashing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwash container 50L with tap and stand • Daily refilling/maintenance • CBI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase handwashing promotion at household level and ensure each shared family toilet is equipped with appropriate handwashing device. • CBI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washbasin/sink • CBI
Bathing spaces/showers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath / shower blocks (community shared, gender segregated) • Portable gender-segregated shower facilities (urban) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bath / shower coverage • Encourage families to build their own facilities • CBI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household bath/shower cubicle • Showers installed in prefabricated buildings/containers, or other suitable structures (urban) • CBI
Hygiene Promotion/ Users' Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEC materials • Hygiene kit • Baby kit • CBI for hygiene items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of users' committees • CBI for hygiene items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of WASH services through users' committees • CBI for hygiene items
Solid waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubbish bins • Collection services/incentive workers • Rubbish pits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste transfer and disposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce, recycling and reuse • Waste transfer and disposal
Vector control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor residual spraying • Rodent control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor residual spraying • Rodent control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor residual spraying • Rodent control
Laundry facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry basin • Drying lines 8mm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to longer-term cost-effective solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry slabs • Drying lines
Schools/ Health clinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trench toilets with privacy screens • Portable toilets • Bath/shower blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to longer-term cost-effective solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet blocks • Shower blocks • Water points/rainwater harvesting/tanks

Multi-Year WASH Response Plans

31. Wherever possible and when refugee WASH responses are not yet integrated into national and local services, WASH stakeholders may develop a multi-year, country level WASH Response Plan⁶, with the ultimate goal of aligning with national and local development plans. The plan can briefly describe the refugee context, the baseline WASH situation, WASH coverage, WASH gaps, agreed levels of service standards / indicators, and transition plans toward existing services for water supply, excreta management, solid waste management, hygiene promotion and disease vector control.
32. A multi-year, settlement-level WASH operational response plan describing the short, medium, and long-term plans for WASH facilities and services may help coordination among various WASH stakeholders, to map out the operational activities and resources required to achieve the plan. The plan is best developed in the form of a 4W Matrix that clearly describes WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHO and HOW MUCH it will cost. This can then be used for multi-year planning and budgeting purposes and reflected in the operation's multi-year strategy, as well as in Refugee Response Plans and to inform investment cases for development actors. A template for a settlement level refugee WASH Operational Plan and Budget is provided in Table 7.
33. Multi-year WASH operational plans should focus on progressively improving the access indicators and moving as rapidly as possible from emergency communal sanitation facilities towards individual household facilities while integrating services into the ones locally provided to hosting communities. If they are non-existent or too weak, provisions should be made for those as well through advocacy with development actors.
34. The multi-year approach to WASH plans should consider and balance the immediate needs for provision of emergency WASH services for refugees, and the longer term need to invest in strengthened local WASH systems that can also accommodate refugee needs. Where possible, advocate for and mobilize (development) resources for long-term WASH facilities rather than providing short term, costly solutions which sustainability is very limited. Preparation of country level WASH plan should be carried out in full collaboration with all the active WASH stakeholders, particularly relevant ministries, local service providers, and development actors, and aligning with local and national development plans.

Table 7: Example Template for (4W Matrix) settlement level WASH Operational Plan and Budget

WHERE	WHEN	WHAT	WHO	HOW MUCH
Location X	Emergency Response (Short Term)	Water: Trucking 15 L/p/d	Agency A	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Sanitation: Trench toilets 1:50	Agency B	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Hygiene: Bath shelters 1:50 Handwashing 1:8 toilets Provision of soap	Agency B	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Solid Waste: Collection daily, remove by truck to municipal disposal site	Agency C	Budget Estimate \$\$
	Transition	Water: Boreholes and temporary network 20 L/p/d	Agency A	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Sanitation: Shared HH toilets 1:20	Agency B	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Hygiene: Bath shelters 1:20 Handwashing – HH distribution of soap and handwashing devices	Agency B	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Solid Waste: Communal rubbish pits	Agency C	Budget Estimate \$\$
	Basic (Longer-term)	Water: Boreholes, solar pumps & piped water network 20 L/p/d Design, construction, O&M	Agency X	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Sanitation: HH toilets, 1 per HH (self-built)	Agency Y	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Hygiene: Bath shelters, 1 per HH (self-built)	Agency Y	Budget Estimate \$\$
		Solid Waste: HH rubbish pits, disposal	Agency Y	Budget Estimate \$\$

Common Refugee Settlements

35. Refugee responses may happen in diverse forms of settlements. These settlements may vary in how well serviced they are, what their carrying capacity is, their exposure to hazards and the coping mechanisms of the displaced population. It is important to plan appropriate WASH responses relevant to the settlement typology.

36. [Typical settlement typologies](#) include:
- a. **Individual accommodation in communities:** People living in individual housing or with host families in cities, towns, villages.
 - b. **Formal settlement:** Official land is allocated for a group of asylum seekers, refugees or internally displaced person (IDPs). They are accommodated in on purpose-built settlements with access to facilities and services. An official management entity is assigned. Camps are a type of formal settlement.
 - c. **Informal settlement:** A group of asylum-seekers, refugees or IDPs choose to settle in self-identified spontaneous sites. Self-settled settlements can be located on state-owned, private or communal land, with or without negotiations with the local population or private landowners.
 - d. **Collective center:** An accommodation where a group of asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs reside / are accommodated in pre-existing buildings such as community centres, town halls, schools or unfinished buildings or newly established ones. They often occur when there is a sudden influx and rental markets are overwhelmed. Collective centres are intended to be of a temporary nature.
 - e. **Transit Center:** Used at the beginning of a new emergency with often high influx and is hosting asylum-seekers, refugees or IDPs pending transfer to a suitable formal settlement, individual private accommodation, or to areas of return.
37. Statistics over time have proven that majority of refugees settle in urban and rural areas alongside hosting population. Those settling in formal camps and settlements represent a small percentage (around 26%), and this should be reflected in the way UNHCR programs WASH responses.

A comprehensive approach to WASH service provision

Ensuring a comprehensive mix of hardware, software and the enabling environment

38. WASH programmes are best planned based on a comprehensive mix of hardware, software, and enabling environment interventions. It is advisable that the same amounts of resources that are invested into building WASH hardware (e.g. pumps, pipes, toilets, showers etc.) is also invested into maximising the protection and health benefits of this infrastructure through e.g. hygiene promotion. In addition, resources should be also invested to ensure that the WASH infrastructure is sustainably managed by local service providers, or local communities with limited assistance from UNHCR. Protection and accountability should be considered throughout (see Chapter 1 for more details).
39. In all settings, investments need to be considered in the capacity of the refugee population to manage their own WASH programming and to facilitate sustainability, resilience, and eventually independence. Enabling environment interventions include:

- ◆ Demand-led approaches (e.g. marketing for improved sanitation and access to water).
- ◆ Supporting the local WASH private sector (e.g. supporting handpump spare parts markets, local sanitary artisans, local drillers, local producers/distributors of sanitary wares including toilets, toilet slabs, showers, plumbing accessories etc.).
- ◆ Institutional strengthening (e.g. capacity building of local WASH service providers or regulatory authorities, through development action).

Appropriate technology selection, quality and value for money

Targeting efficient WASH operations as early as possible

40. WASH services should target sustainability, cost-efficiency, affordability as quickly as possible, and be easily operated and maintained.
41. Where the existing WASH systems have insufficient capacity, or new systems are required, emergency phase WASH interventions, in particularly water trucking, toilet desludging, and operating and maintaining large communal WASH blocks, although lifesaving and in certain contexts unavoidable, can be very costly and inefficient on the longer run. Clear strategies should be developed from the start that include transition to more efficient and sustainable responses.
42. Solutions should be selected to reduce dependence on imported equipment, chemicals and spare parts, fuel supplies, or staff with specialised skills not available locally. Examples of solutions that prove cost-efficient on the longer term are, depending on context: solar pumping, rainwater harvesting, spring captures, gravity-flow roughing filtration, gravity flow piped networks (for both water and wastewater), greywater reuse, solid waste recycling and reuse.

Prioritize household facilities as early as possible

43. Prioritizing household owned and managed sanitation facilities (toilets, showers, laundry areas, solid waste collection facilities) from the start of an emergency is an efficient way to gain value for money. The sense of ownership contributes to protection, satisfaction, feelings of dignity, and responsibility for ongoing operation and maintenance, which contributes to reduced cost for the WASH response.
44. Where household sanitation facilities are not possible at the beginning of a response, the transition away from communal facilities should be prioritized as quickly as possible.
45. Generally, water supply facilities will be more effectively owned and managed at the communal level. Where appropriate these may move towards provision of individual household connections for an increased level of service, if this is the practice applied in hosting communities.

Selecting WASH technology based on local technical and financial conditions and standards

46. WASH programmes should prioritize the use of locally or regionally available equipment, materials, and spare parts. All consumables should be

readily available in-country to ease their provision while also reducing supply chains which has an impact on costs as well as carbon footprint.

Evaluating WASH technologies based on total lifetime costs

47. Technology should be selected taking into account total life-cycle costing over a return of investment period. Consider the use of technologies that may have higher up front capital costs, but lower long-term maintenance costs. Select the best quality technology with the lowest life cycle cost. For example, solar power for off-grid water pumping has the benefit of affordable operation and maintenance costs and additional environmental benefits with an average return of investment period of 4 to 6 years.
48. WASH programmes should also be guided by per-beneficiary costs of supplying WASH services on an annual basis. Examples include:
 - ◆ The cost of water supply (cost per m³ and per refugee).
 - ◆ The cost of sanitation and hygiene services (cost per person per year).

WASH resources and equipment guidance

49. UNHCR's [Key WASH Resources](#) provides a variety of documents for partner implementation, including commonly constructed WASH facilities and sample detailed drawings and quality specifications that can be used in a WASH response.
50. [UNHCR WASH Equipment Standard Specifications](#) provide guidance on quality standards for commonly used equipment that can be used in WASH responses.

Integrated programming with a focus on sustainability

WASH and SDGs

51. [Sustainable Development Goal](#) 6 targets “Sustainable access to water and sanitation FOR ALL”, with a focus on Universal Coverage, which means that forcibly displaced people should be included in National Development Plans (NDPs) for Water and Sanitation. SDG 6 therefore becomes key to unlocking development funding for improving WASH service provision to refugees. To this end, UNHCR works with governments and development partners to advocate that refugees are included in their financing and planning instruments from the earliest stages of a refugee response, and preferably from the emergency preparedness phase. To the extent possible, WASH programmes should be developed and implemented in full collaboration with the local water, waste, hygiene and vector control service providers and regulatory authorities. They should extend existing services to refugees where possible, to discourage the establishment of costly parallel humanitarian systems that are not sustainable.
52. Where possible, refugee WASH interventions should build on and support existing local markets with minimum distortion.
53. Humanitarian WASH programs should align, to the extent possible, with national standards for water supply, water quality, sanitary codes, and environmental measures and monitoring. Where they exist, national standards should take precedence over UNHCR standards. In some cases, such as the Middle East, national standards are much higher than UNHCR minimum standards while in rural areas such as in Chad, national standard

may not exist. Diversion from the national standards should be adequately discussed and agreed to, so as to guarantee full inclusion while not compromising basic hygiene practices and cultural habits.

54. WASH programmes should consider adequate capacity building of national WASH service provider and refugees to facilitate early inclusion and, when needed, eventual transition toward local service providers. This will often entail involvement of development actors and other UN agencies such as [UNICEF](#), which is more conversant with system strengthening programs.
55. WASH programmes can also support the development of WASH related skills within the refugee population which can serve them as a way to build their livelihood opportunities.

Urban WASH interventions

56. Currently nearly two thirds of refugees globally are hosted within urban environments. Accommodation options depend greatly on the context and generally include renting, collective centres, staying with host families, or informal settlements. An influx of refugees into an urban environment can quickly overburden municipal WASH services leading to water shortages, increases in open defecation, waste dumping, contamination of water supplies and conflicts over WASH resources. It is therefore essential that the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines is provided.
57. In urban displacement settings, WASH interventions may be required for both the host and refugee populations to raise WASH service provision to levels experienced before the displacement crisis, and/or in line with national standards which could have not been met before the influx. These should consider protection and accountability of both refugee and host communities. A similar approach should be considered when formal settlements cannot be avoided, and nearby hosting community has been left behind from development support.
58. Provision of WASH services for forcibly displaced in urban and dispersed settings can be significantly more complicated than in formal settlements as it is harder to assess WASH needs, particularly at household level, and based on the findings, provide timely WASH assistance. Moreover, monitoring is harder and evaluating the impact of the WASH response can be more complicated in view of the physical spread and mobility of the population.
59. Many problems with poor WASH service delivery in urban and dispersed settings may be chronic, existing prior to the refugee situation, or in the case of informal settlements, refugees may have self-settled in areas without service coverage. In some cases, WASH services for the resident urban poor may be worse than for the newly arrived refugee population.
60. WASH responses should consider blanket WASH interventions for both the refugee and host populations in areas that are generally heavily impacted by the newly arrived population as this is a fast way to reach people in need at the beginning of an emergency. A more targeted approach should be carefully planned in parallel with local authorities, municipal services, CBI actors, among others. Targeting and prioritization should be based on

vulnerability criteria of concerned families (both refugees and hosting), as well as the most underserved neighbourhoods, areas or villages.

Table 8 provides a summary of types of WASH Interventions in urban settings, as described in UNHCR’s Emergency Handbook [WASH in Emergencies](#).

Table 8: Sample WASH assistance to refugees in urban settings

Collective centers (public or private buildings), or informal settlements	Rented accommodation or hosting options	Influx overwhelms the local population (assistance also to host population)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary water points/extension of water networks to the concerned locations. • Water dispensers (or bottled water, if unavoidable). • Refilling taps connected to municipal water supply. • Clean up campaigns (against open defecation, waste, and for ditches) • Reinforcing sanitation and solid waste collection services. • Provision of hygiene kits, water filters/household level treatment, also via CBI. • Construction of temporary toilet and bathing facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of hygiene kits, water filters/household level treatment, also via CBI. • Provision of a sanitation improvement package (e.g. for construction of extra toilet and bathing facilities), also via CBI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary public water points and/or extension/reinforcement of water networks to the concerned locations. • Rehabilitation of existing public WASH infrastructure. • Clean up campaigns (against open defecation, waste, and for ditches). • Reinforcing sanitation and solid waste collection and treatment services. • Provision of hygiene kits, water filters/household level treatment, also via CBI. • WASH related community driven Quick Impact Projects (QIPs).

Exit strategy

61. When there is a need to set up parallel services, ensure that a clear exit strategy exists from the start of the emergency phase. It should consider the operation, maintenance, transition and eventual decommissioning or handing over to national authorities or national actors of emergency water, toilet, wastewater and solid waste infrastructures.

Working with urban municipal authorities

62. All work to provide WASH assistance in buildings and areas hosting refugees should be undertaken in conjunction with municipal authorities.

63. At the area level, authorities will guide in the identification of areas hosting refugees that were already under strain before the influx and that may need WASH support.

64. At the building or household level, assessments should be undertaken to determine upgrades that are necessary to meet WASH needs. Before

undertaking any works there should be a clear agreement describing rights, duties, ownership and responsibilities in place with the landowner.

Coordination with shelter interventions in collective centres

65. In urban settings, the WASH response in collective centres should be coordinated with shelter actors. Collective centres will be identified and agreed with the authorities. In collective centres, generally, Shelter actors may support with improving building conditions (structural stability, safety, earthquake resistance, sealing, weather protection, roofing, windows, partition walls, ventilation, winterization, electrical wiring, access, damp, noise). Thus, it may be more resource-efficient to also include upgrades that enable access to adequate water supply, excreta management, bathing, laundering, solid waste, wastewater, hygiene and disease vector control services. WASH actors should ensure that close coordination is also carried out during the assessment and shelter identification stages to ensure that refugee sites are selected based on the feasibility of providing on-going WASH services.

Cash based interventions

66. In line with [Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2022 - 2026](#), priority should be given to meeting refugee WASH needs through Cash Based Interventions (CBIs). This helps to stimulate existing WASH markets and facilitates flexibility for refugees to meet their own WASH needs. If not included in Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), cash top ups may be established for hygiene related non-food items (eg soap, buckets, bowls, sanitary products, water treatment products, or menstrual hygiene items). Cash can also be used for purchasing drinking water, water containers, hygiene supplies, plumbing services, toilet upgrading or desludging services. More guidance for cash-based interventions can be found in [Good Practices on Cash Based Interventions and WASH](#) and UNHCR's Emergency Handbook [Cash-Based Interventions](#).

67. Cash based interventions are particularly useful for WASH programming in urban settings where the refugee population is dispersed among the general population. Cash can be used for purchasing potable drinking water, hygiene supplies, or toilet upgrading or desludging services.

Protection of the environment and climate change mitigation

68. Poorly managed WASH activities can potentially have a negative impact on the environment and further aggravate climate change. The major environmental risks from WASH programmes are related to pollution and degradation of the environment from poorly managed excreta, greywater, solid waste, and disease vector control related activities. In addition, over-exploitation of fragile water resources may lead to rapid depletion with irreversible impacts on water reserves or fragile ecosystems. Finally, unsustainable procurement of wood or burned bricks for toilet construction may present a large environmental risk particularly in locations where sustainable supplies of wood are limited.

69. In all cases short, medium, and long-term environmental impacts from WASH interventions should be considered from the outset of a refugee emergency, aligning with UNHCR's Emergency Handbook [Environmental](#)

[and Extreme Weather-Related Considerations in Emergencies](#). Failure to do so can have widespread ramifications and prove costly to address. Preventative and mitigation measures are far more cost-effective than remedial actions. Environmental measures should be considered from the start. UNHCR's [Green Companion Guide](#) offers practical appraisal tools, case studies and innovative steps for reducing environmental impacts.

Respect of local sanitary codes and national environmental legislation

70. In all settings, local sanitary codes and environmental legislation related to water, wastewater, excreta, blackwater, sewage, solid waste, vector control should be considered. During short term emergency responses, it may be possible to negotiate with national authorities for relaxation of sanitary codes and environmental standards. In cases where national sanitary codes and environmental legislation do not exist then the minimum guidance provided in this UNHCR document should be considered, based on adaptation to the local context and situation. WASH programmes should be designed and monitored in close collaboration with local regulatory authorities. All environment related rules, regulations and norms should be clearly communicated to the refugee population.

Environmental screening and impact mitigation

71. Where feasible, environmental screenings should be undertaken for WASH activities. [Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool \(NEAT+\)](#) is a rapid and simple project level tool for humanitarian operations that helps to quickly identify and prioritize issues of environmental concern and relevant mitigation measures. Environmental screening should include at a minimum:

- ◆ Environmental related risks at each stage of water supply, excreta management, greywater disposal and solid waste management. The risks should be considered according to their likely probability and impact.
- ◆ Mitigation measures, monitoring parameters and corrective actions for the more critical WASH related risks.

72. Where feasible, an overview of national environmental legislation related to water supply, excreta management, greywater disposal and solid waste management should be developed.

73. Overall preparation and monitoring of the WASH environmental screening and mitigation measures is the responsibility of the WASH programme. Collaboration with UNHCR's environmental focal points or field colleagues and national environmental monitoring authorities would further strengthen and mainstream these activities.

Climate resilient WASH

74. In line with the [Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#) and the [Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030](#), UNHCR works towards climate-resilient WASH systems. Interventions consider and mitigate against climate risks, incorporate early warning systems, and are adaptive to climate impacts. UNHCR and WASH stakeholders should also aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and negative effects on natural resources.

75. Many of the world's forcibly displaced people live in some of the most climate-vulnerable areas. Refugees face significant impacts from climate

change, including water scarcity, contamination, and damage to WASH infrastructure caused by floods, droughts, severe weather and overexploitation of natural resources.

76. To protect against these impacts, WASH responses should consider a minimum of:

- ◆ Assessments of risks and impacts of climate change and development of relevant preparedness measures.
- ◆ Identification and inclusion of WASH systems in relevant early warning systems for both extreme (eg floods) and slow onset (eg droughts) events.
- ◆ Participation in relevant climate governance mechanisms, such as Integrated Water Resource Management.
- ◆ Integration of mitigation and adaptation measures for climate risk in WASH systems, including nature-based solutions, climate proofing of infrastructure and services and reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions from WASH activities.
- ◆ Collaboration and advocacy with partners to build the capacity of communities to prevent, anticipate, withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change on WASH systems.

Site closure and soil remediation

77. Where there is requirement for site closure all WASH facilities should be safely decommissioned, and environmental restoration work carried out. This is particularly relevant for toilets, faecal sludge and solid waste management facilities, where remediation of contaminated soil may be required to minimise any future public health or environmental risks. Works should be carried out in accordance with relevant national guidelines or legislation. Refer to [OG-800/2015a UNHCR WASH Guidelines on Camps Closure](#) (UNHCR, 2015).

3. WASH Sector Coordination

WASH sector coordination is an essential activity in all refugee settings to ensure there is a synergic and collaborative approach to providing WASH services to the refugee population. Coordination in accordance with the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM) includes ensuring that there is a common WASH strategy aligned with national and sub-national development plans; national and local authorities are empowered in the coordination of the response; harmonized assessment of WASH needs; avoidance of gaps and duplication; definition and application of appropriate technical standards; joint mobilisation and allocation of resources; building of capacity; monitoring of performance; combined advocacy efforts; joint information sharing; joint preparedness and contingency planning; and to ensure there is capture and application of lessons learned and sector best practice.

Refugee Coordination Model and WASH Sector Coordination

1. UNHCR is responsible for ensuring that WASH coordination in all refugee settings is effective, accountable and considers national system inclusion. This responsibility is guided by the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM), UNHCR's framework for organizing refugee responses in partnership with governments, UN agencies, NGOs and development actors. The RCM defines how UNHCR leads and supports coordination in refugee operations. The [updated RCM Guidance](#) indicates how this is done in **mixed movements** involving refugees and migrants, and **mixed situations** that include refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and where the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster approach may be activated. Where both refugees and IDPs are present, UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF work together to ensure clear division of roles, consistent technical standards, and complementary planning and reporting.
2. It is important to distinguish between RCM and the cluster approach, two related but separate coordination systems. Using the correct terminology, "sector" for refugee coordination and "cluster" for IDP coordination, helps to maintain this clarity:
 - ◆ The WASH sector applies to refugee situations and is co-led by UNHCR and the host government. UNHCR may delegate day-to-day coordination to a qualified partner, but retains overall responsibility for ensuring a coherent and accountable sector response.

- ◆ The WASH Cluster applies to situations of internal displacement or sudden-onset emergencies (such as disasters or disease outbreaks) and is led by UNICEF, as Cluster Lead Agency, together with the host government under the IASC framework.
3. WASH sector coordination is essential in every refugee response to ensure that partners work toward a shared strategy and common standards for delivering safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Effective coordination supports joint assessments and analysis of needs; harmonized technical standards and indicators; collective resource mobilization and prioritization; partner capacity-building; performance monitoring; and joint advocacy. It also promotes efficient information sharing and a united long-term vision for sustainable WASH services that benefit both refugees and host communities. The WASH sector lead is responsible for ensuring strong inter-sector collaboration, especially with Health, Shelter, Education, Livelihoods, Protection, Nutrition, Site Planning, and Community-Based Protection sectors, so that WASH actions contribute to overall protection and well-being outcomes.

WASH sector coordination implementation arrangements

4. Appropriate refugee WASH Sector coordination arrangements will depend on the scale, phasing, and anticipated duration of the refugee situation. Other factors to consider include government, UN and NGO response capacity and the presence and effectiveness of existing coordination mechanisms. Whatever the structure adopted, it should be allowed to adjust to suit all stages of the response, such as expanding during intensive relief activities and scaling back during protracted phases.
5. A key element of the RCM is that sector coordination, whenever possible, should be led by Government line ministries and/or (co)chaired by UNHCR and/or (co)chaired by one of UNHCR partners. If WASH coordination mechanisms already exist, then UNHCR must ensure that coordination is supported, reinforced and functioning effectively - avoiding creation of parallel structures.
6. During large emergencies, rapid arrangements may be made to establish rapid refugee WASH sector coordination, which may include a dedicated refugee WASH sector coordination focal point, Information Management Officer, and resources for coordination either within UNHCR or for a partner organisation. If coordination is delegated to an operational partner (based on field presence and capacity), UNHCR remains accountable for ensuring effective coordination of the refugee WASH response at the national, sub-national and site levels. Depending on the coordination arrangements, the refugee WASH sector coordination focal point may be hosted at either UNHCR, or within national government authorities (if a co-leadership arrangement of sector coordination is established).
7. In refugee responses WASH sector coordination is likely to be required at two levels:

- ◆ **National Level:** primarily country level strategic planning and decision making, liaison, information sharing and reporting into broader multi-sector refugee coordination platforms.
- ◆ **Sub-National / Settlement Level:** coordination for planning and response activities within the region or at specific refugee settlements.

The importance of dedicated coordination personnel and resources

8. Resources should be made available to make sector coordination work from the start of the refugee emergency through the appropriate allocation of resources for WASH coordination staff and information managers, supporting the leadership of relevant ministries to avoid parallel coordination structures.
9. The role of the refugee WASH sector coordination focal point is to facilitate a well-coordinated and effective humanitarian response to a refugee situation. At all times the refugee WASH sector coordination focal point should act in the best interest of the refugees and the WASH sector as a whole rather than his or her own organisation.

Establishment of an Advisory Group

10. In refugee emergencies with many WASH sector members, a Refugee WASH Advisory Group may be established to ensure that decision making on behalf of WASH actors remains democratic and transparent. The Advisory Group can share some of the coordination workload particularly the responsibility for decision making. An Advisory Group is essential to be able to demonstrate that critical or influential decisions have been made by a group of persons rather than a single individual/entity. The steering or Advisory Group size should generally be managed to ensure the balance between the need for rapid decision making, effective management, and the need for broad participation. The group should aim to represent all major stakeholders including national WASH actors and sub-national WASH sector leads.

Creation of Technical Working Groups

11. Technical, working, or sub-groups are useful in producing technical guidelines, analysing problems, resolving concerns, and formalising principles and responsibilities. Consensus is more easily achieved within a smaller group. To establish a Technical Working Group (TWG), a focal point should be elected with responsibility for establishing the group, defining the Terms of Reference (TOR), and feeding back on their activities and recommendations to the wider sector group. Sample TORs and additional guidance is available at UNHCR's [Sector Working Groups](#).
12. A TWG's lifespan should be determined by its purpose and deliverables. Once the purpose and deliverables have been achieved it is better to dissolve the group rather than have many smaller groups that continue to meet without clear objectives. Membership of TWGs should be through voluntary self-selection, and special expertise may be co-opted as required.

Practical Guidance for WASH Sector Coordination

Immediate establishment of sector coordination arrangements

13. Refugee WASH sector leadership and coordination is an essential activity that is ideally commenced during the contingency planning process prior to any refugee emergency and should be in place immediately at the onset of any refugee emergency. The provision of basic coordination activities (for example establishing a regular time and place for WASH organisations to meet and share information) is better than delayed provision of improved systems. If WASH coordination mechanisms for refugees already exist at national or sub-national level, then that coordination should be supported, reinforced and functioning effectively. Avoid creating parallel coordination mechanisms. Where possible, WASH coordination arrangements should be co-chaired by the national government or relevant local authorities with strong support from UNHCR.

Establishment of a programme of refugee WASH coordination meetings

14. Coordination meetings at the national, sub-national or settlement levels are essential for leading the response planning, monitoring progress, and communicating information. It is essential that the refugee WASH sector lead ensures effective and efficient coordination meetings are taking place that are productive and do not waste time.

15. To this end, ensure that refugee WASH meetings have clear agendas, and any action points are clearly documented. Meeting frequency can be adjusted according to the speed of change in the context. A rapidly changing context will require more frequent meetings so actors can stay up to date on the latest information, actions and decisions. A stabilized context requires less frequent meetings.

Assessment of needs and gaps

16. Harmonized WASH assessments are an essential activity in every refugee setting to identify the most affected segments of the population, their locations and coping mechanisms, public health related risks and the most urgent WASH interventions that are required. Coordination is needed to ensure that, where possible, WASH agencies use harmonized data collection tools, indicators and common operational datasets (eg common location names, population sizes, administrative boundaries). Use of harmonized tools and approaches means that a common analysis of WASH needs and gaps can be developed through sharing of assessment information and analysis resources. It is essential that all assessment teams include both female and male members so that women can speak to women during the process. See Chapter 4 for more information.

Box 4: Guidance for Refugee WASH Coordination Meetings

Before the meeting

1. If appropriate, ensure (or advocate strongly) for government chairing or co-chairing of refugee WASH coordination meetings.
2. Ensure that there is a clear agenda that is circulated well in advance. Ensure the agenda reflects the needs of participants to discuss key topics.
3. Ensure there is sufficient information for participants to know what they need to do to prepare in advance.
4. Ensure WASH actors have been contacted to facilitate different parts of the meeting in order to change presentation style and demonstrate open collaboration.
5. Ensure that there is a suitable venue for meeting that is comfortable and facilitates productivity and sharing of information. Consider rotating the meeting among refugee WASH sector members' offices.
6. Ensure that all the required resources (projectors, extension cables, whiteboards, maps, reports, refreshments) are prepared.
7. Ensure attendance of key decision makers – encourage their involvement in meetings through maintaining regular, personal contact. The better the relationships with refugee WASH actors, the better the coordination.
8. Only call a coordination meeting when it is absolutely necessary and review the meeting frequency with the Advisory Group.

During the meeting

1. Ensure that the meeting starts promptly and finishes on-time. Try to keep the timings to those in the published agenda without limiting time for discussion.
2. Allow time for all members to introduce themselves and provide a short (two minute) agency update. Allow actors enough time to feel engaged in the meeting (break the ice) – but refrain endless talks. Detailed agency updates should be shared via other means (e.g. written updates and 3W, 4W).
3. Ensure that the objective of the meeting is understood and achieved. As the meeting progresses, compile a clear summary of short, medium, and long-term action points (WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW). At the end of the meeting summarize what needs to be done before the following meeting.
4. Share and discuss the latest 4W Matrix. Update the 4W matrix based on WASH agency resources. Allocate additional resources as per needs.
5. Share and discuss the short, medium and long-term thematic strategies.
6. If lengthy topics for discussion arise, consider the option of tackling them within a separate Technical Working Group or the Advisory Group.

After the meeting

1. Ensure that all presentation materials from the meeting are uploaded onto the WASH sector coordination website (where available).
2. Ensure that the meeting minutes of meetings are circulated within three days and invite comments and corrections.
3. Follow up with key decision makers that couldn't attend the meeting. Ensure they have a written or verbal update of the meeting's outcomes.
4. Follow up with key action points and ensure prompt feedback on decisions taken.
5. Update the revised contact information on the refugee coordination website.

Adapted from the [GWC Coordination Tool Kit](#)

Establishment of WASH Sector Operational Response Plans

17. UNHCR and WASH actors should ensure that coordination efforts lead to the creation of common refugee WASH Strategy and Operational Plans at the national, and sub-national / settlement levels. This is essential so that WASH actors (including relevant authorities and donors) are able to understand, contribute to and budget for both the immediate activities and the long-term vision for WASH service provision. Use inter-agency coordination to achieve consensus on common approaches for levels of service provision, appropriate technology / approaches, value for money, and protection considerations (refer to section 2 for more details).
18. The 4W Matrix (who, what, where and for whom) is the accountability framework for the operational response plan and should be used to lead and guide the response. The matrix will show the overall masterplan of WASH activities for the short, medium and longer term and will show operational gaps where new partners can step in to implement activities. It can also be used to monitor progress of partners on the agreed activities

Establishment of agreed common Standards and Indicators

19. Refugee WASH actors should agree and use common WASH standards and indicators for the refugee WASH response. The UNHCR WASH Standards and Indicators are listed in UNHCR's Emergency Handbook: [WASH in Emergencies](#).
20. Where possible, WASH standards should be aligned with national standards, or existing service levels within the surrounding host community, as described in section 21.

Establish common indicator monitoring

21. Reporting on the refugee WASH sector's needs, progress indicators and gaps is needed so that stakeholders inside and outside of the sector are aware of WASH service coverage, resource availability, and implementation progress towards defined targets. In many cases, common reporting is vital to mobilize additional resources and raise awareness of key problems (particularly lack of funding). In every refugee setting the WASH Sector lead should ensure that they have the capacity to collate, analyse and report on collective progress and outcomes.
22. All WASH agencies working in refugee settings should report their activities to the refugee WASH sector coordination focal point to ensure maximum coordination efficiency.
23. As a minimum, the UNHCR key WASH indicators should be routinely monitored in all refugee settings, through UNHCR's [Technical Information Management System](#) (TIMS)⁷. In addition, the indicators may also be communicated via the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#), or other external

⁷ UNHCR's Technical Information Management System has integrated the previous WASH Monitoring System, which is no longer in use.

information management platforms such as [Activity Info](#). UNHCR funded partners must also report bi-annually to the UNHCR Programme Officer for recording in the COMPASS database. Normally, additional detailed indicators related to the WASH response will also need to be collected and analysed at the field level to enable detailed management of specific programme activities.

24. Where possible, joint field visits with WASH partners should be arranged to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

Information Management, mapping and reporting

25. The ability to produce maps is an essential coordination activity in large refugee emergencies. Information management staff with skills in using mapping software should be considered as a core function within the sector. Any new WASH facilities constructed should be mapped, the information submitted in [TIMS](#) and included in the [GIS Visualisation](#) where possible (eg location of critical water installations like boreholes).

26. Often the clearest way to present indicator monitoring and 4W data is graphically in the form of a thematic map (eg a map showing distance to water points) or infographic. These allow refugee WASH actors to obtain a very clear picture of where WASH interventions have recently been carried out in addition to gaps and duplications.

27. Refugee WASH sector situation report (sitrep) updates should also be regularly produced. These sitreps should provide a narrative snapshot of the current WASH situation faced by the refugee population and updates of key WASH indicators. The data in the sitreps should be drawn from the 4W matrix and the progress indicator reports. These may be prepared as stand-alone documents or may feed into the UNHCR multi-sector reporting mechanisms.

28. An important aspect of information management is the ability to rapidly share different types of information with the refugee WASH community. It is important that the refugee WASH sector not only has an active physical presence but also continues to interact through a virtual presence. In every refugee setting WASH information should be closely integrated with UNHCR's [Operational Data Portal](#). In addition, refugee WASH coordination structures may consider establishing additional web-based coordination mechanisms for the sharing of documentation, contact information, meeting minutes and other WASH information. This can be as simple as a DropBox or Google Drive account.

Coordinated sector preparedness and contingency planning

29. Preparedness for either new refugee influxes or natural hazards, climate change and other environmental events and conditions (like floods and droughts) that may hit refugee hosting areas is a key activity. Preparedness activities can include emergency risk analysis and monitoring and contingency planning.

30. Refugee hosting areas should be included in national and local emergency preparedness plans, and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies. If this is not the case, UNHCR and WASH actors, including relevant authorities, should ensure that country level and settlement level WASH contingency plans are prepared in conjunction with multi-sectorial plans that include an analysis of historical and probable scenarios, likely impacts, WASH needs, WASH stockpiling and stand-by arrangements, coordination arrangements, and links to early warning systems.
31. Part of the preparedness activities include ensuring that there is consensus over common interagency WASH rapid and comprehensive assessment tools and approaches in addition to common emergency response implementation methods, approaches and standards. Efforts undertaken during the preparedness phase can dramatically improve the quality and effectiveness of any future WASH responses.
32. UNHCR's Emergency Handbook provides overall guidance and resources on [Preparedness and Response](#) and specific [Interagency Tools for Preparedness](#).

Capture and application of lessons learned and sector best practice

33. Refugee WASH sector coordination mechanisms should strive to continuously evaluate the refugee WASH sector response in terms of speed, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Ensure that all lessons learned are used to inform changes in programming and sector best practice on a national and global level.
34. As refugee WASH responses may also expand to support nearby hosting communities with inadequate WASH services, it is important to consider those support programs too.

Ensure WASH interventions are fully coordinated with other sectors

35. WASH activities should be closely coordinated between agencies and across sectors including Settlement Planning, Shelter, Protection, Education, Livelihoods, Public Health, Nutrition, Energy and Environment. This is essential in order to avoid confusion, and to ensure there are no overlaps or gaps. It also strengthens protection (such as gender, accountability and engaging with particularly vulnerable groups) and the quality of the response.
36. Capacity should also be built of all staff and partners supporting refugee responses, so that they have the capacity and confidence to be able to implement programmes and services in a way that enhances people's safety and dignity in line with UNHCR's [protection principles](#) and the Do No Harm approach; as well as to use resources in a manner that is efficient, effective, equitably and ethically for ultimate accountability to the affected populations. All frontline workers, in particular, should understand the conduct and behaviours that are expected of them and protection principles to ensure that

people are not made more vulnerable through their actions or subject to [Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (SEA).

37. Ensure that response-wide feedback and response mechanisms are in place across the WASH response and that these are followed-up and acted on. This enables programmes to receive information on the effectiveness of interventions as well as offering affected populations the opportunity to raise concerns and report abuses.

Examples of cross-sectoral interaction with WASH include:

- a. **Community based protection:** CBP actors can support in the establishment and management of feedback systems for refugee responses and the establishment and management of water committees to facilitate community-led operation of WASH services.
- b. **Education and WASH in Schools:** Collaboration is essential to ensure adequate WASH facilities are available in schools, to enhance attendance. This is particularly important for girls during their menstrual periods. It is important to help staff to understand how to ensure schools provide an MHM-friendly environment; to keep WASH facilities in a good condition and safe for use by both girls and boys; and to ensure that education on WASH and MHM is part of the curriculum. Planning and construction of WASH facilities within education facilities should be a joint collaboration:
 - ◆ For new schools, the design and construction of the facilities should be undertaken by WASH, based on the planning parameters provided by the education expert.
 - ◆ For existing schools, the design and construction and funding for rehabilitation/extensions/upgrades of existing facilities should be undertaken by WASH, based on the specifications provided by the education expert. WASH should oversee works for the rehabilitation, extensions or upgrades of existing facilities.
 - ◆ The regular operation and maintenance, including cleaning and other hygiene activities is best placed with personnel present at the education facility.
 - ◆ WASH may do routine monitoring of the WASH facilities to ensure they meet with required standards and highlight to Education any areas of concern for maintenance and/or improvement.
 - ◆ For routine WASH services such as desludging of latrines, supply of water, or removal of solid waste, Education may request support from WASH.
- c. **Health:**
 - ◆ **Coordinated outbreak preparedness and response:** It is critical to coordinate with the Health Sector and their government counterparts for preparedness and response to communicable disease outbreaks, including water-related disease outbreaks. Key WASH interventions include:

- Preparedness actions by supporting the health sector in conducting risk assessments; stockpiling essential supplies such as chlorine and soap, and building community awareness jointly with the community health outreach workforce.
- Provision of safe drinking water through treatment (including increased chlorination and water quantity), adequate household water storage capacity, and regular monitoring of water quality.
- Provision of sanitation facilities to prevent environmental contamination, including by establishing emergency latrines where required, as well as waste disposal, drainage and vector control.
- Promote hygiene practices such as handwashing, including through distribution of soap. Hygiene promotion messages should be aligned with messages provided by the health sector. Outreach should be prioritized through Community Health Workers wherever possible, to ensure aligned messaging and to enhance cost efficiency. See also [Operational Guidance: Community Health in Refugee Settings](#).

Refer to the [MSF Cholera Guidelines](#) and the [UNICEF Cholera Toolkit](#) for more information specific on cholera.

- ◆ **WASH in Healthcare Facilities:** Collaboration is essential to ensure adequate WASH facilities are available in health facilities to provide basic amenities to patients and staff as well as to contribute to infection prevention and control. Planning and construction of WASH facilities within health facilities should be a joint collaboration:
 - For new health facilities, the design and construction of WASH facilities should be undertaken by WASH based on the planning parameters provided by the public health expert.
 - For existing health facilities, the design, construction and funding of WASH facilities should be undertaken by WASH experts based on specifications provided by the public health expert. WASH should oversee works for the rehabilitation, extensions or upgrades of existing facilities.
 - The regular operation and maintenance, including cleaning and other hygiene activities is best placed with personnel present at the health facility.
 - WASH may do routine monitoring of the WASH facilities jointly with the facility health staff to monitor water quality, ensure the facilities are adequately maintained and highlight to Health any areas of concerns for maintenance and/or improvement.
 - For routine WASH services such as desludging of latrines, supply of water, or removal of solid waste, Health may request support from WASH.
 - The management of medical waste is the responsibility of health facility staff. It should be aligned with national legislation and use nationally/ locally approved service providers. Where local medical waste management systems do not exist, WASH can provide

technical support in the design and construction of medical waste disposal facilities.

- d. **MHM:** A multi-sectoral collaboration on support related to MHM including waste management, hygiene support for mothers after giving birth and for incontinence. Refer to The Full Guide of the [Toolkit for Integrating Menstrual Hygiene Management into Humanitarian Response](#).
- e. **NFIs:**
- ◆ In line with the “Why not Cash Approach” as described in the Emergency Handbook [Cash Based Interventions \(CBIs\)](#), UNHCR recommends the use of cash modality to meet household needs for non-food items, including hygiene products. WASH actors shall advise CBI team of the needs or hygiene items that need to be included in the cash amount to be distributed.
 - ◆ When cash is not a viable option and in-kind distribution has to be organised, field offices are responsible for procurement, distribution, and monitoring of the general household support package. WASH actors are responsible for specifying WASH items to be included in the general household support package in collaboration with the refugee population. Particular care is needed to consult on menstrual hygiene and incontinence needs.
- f. **Protection:** Protection actors can support across several areas, including:
- ◆ Consulting and involving persons with heightened [protection risks](#) (commonly known as “persons with specific needs” (PWSN)) who face specific barriers to accessing WASH services, including developing strategies for support and communicating with these groups. These people may include people with disabilities or serious health concerns, LGBTIQ+ people and marginalized groups,
 - ◆ Clarification on the information to be provided to affected populations on their rights and entitlements.
 - ◆ Supporting monitoring exercises to obtain feedback from women, girls, men, and boys on WASH responses, including on feelings of safety; and following up on reports of violence related to WASH.
 - ◆ Developing strategies for responding to gender issues and developing support mechanisms for women involved in management of WASH.
 - ◆ Capacity building for WASH staff in protection mainstreaming.
- g. **Registration:** Identification of numbers of affected populations by area; identification of particularly vulnerable groups, such as older people, people with disabilities, people with incontinence, pregnant women.
- h. **Settlement Planning:**
- ◆ **Site selection:** In the case where settlements are unavoidable, WASH supports the overall [site selection process](#)⁸ by undertaking an

⁸ Also available in French: [Formulaire d'évaluation de sites](#)

assessment of the water availability, quality, ease of abstraction, ease of treatment, and ease of water distribution for various settlements. In addition, WASH will assess the serviceability of any existing WASH infrastructure at the potential settlements in addition to assessing ground conditions for toilet construction and water infiltration (water point drainage).

- ◆ **Site Layout:** Settlement Planning is responsible for the overall layout of roads, family plots, and communal structures within a refugee settlement. WASH is responsible for planning the design and physical locations of all WASH facilities, considering safety aspects, in close collaboration with the Settlement Planner and refugee community. Women and girls, in particular, should be involved in discussions on the location of WASH facilities and ensuring adequate space is reserved for WASH facilities at safe distances as considered by the users.
 - ◆ **Site Drainage:** Settlement Planning is responsible for overall site level storm water management and drainage. WASH is responsible for localized wastewater drainage from water points, bathing facilities, and laundering facilities.
- i. **Shelter:** Shelter and WASH actors are responsible for ensuring that women, girls, men, and boys have adequate space for managing their WASH needs, including for adequate privacy within their shelters for the management of menstrual hygiene. When cultural habits indicate a preference for bathing facilities within the shelter, both WASH and shelter actors should coordinate the best design to meet such needs and existing site conditions.

4. WASH Assessments

WASH assessments are an essential activity in every refugee response to identify the locations of the most affected sections of the population, their coping mechanisms, risks related to public health, environment and climate hazards, and the most urgent WASH interventions that are required. Timely WASH assessments provide the basis for planning, implementation, and prioritisation of all refugee WASH activities and in many responses are an important factor in saving lives.

General principles for WASH assessments

1. WASH assessments must be timely, inclusive, and context-sensitive, serving as the foundation for effective, coordinated, and life-saving interventions that prioritize the dignity, needs, and voices of affected populations.
2. Involvement of local stakeholders, including national WASH authorities, to gather secondary data on water sources and sanitation is crucial. More detailed assessments in specific locations hosting refugees may be required: this activity should be carried out by sectoral technical experts with appropriate qualifications and relevant experience.
3. In case of a dispersed or dispersed settings, data collection may be time consuming, and it may be difficult to collect up-to-date information. In such instances, it is even more important to work through local authorities, head of villages, community leaders, and head of municipalities to gather data at community/area level.
4. UNHCR and WASH actors should ensure that all WASH assessments are undertaken in a coordinated manner, adhering to the principles and methodologies defined in UNHCR's [Needs Assessment Handbook](#). UNHCR's [Assessment and Monitoring Resource Centre](#) provides additional resources.
5. WASH assessments should be designed in a participatory and transparent manner, taking into account local preferences and cultural norms.
6. Female and male team members should be included in all assessment teams to ensure that females can speak with females. Wherever possible teams should also include representatives of minority/vulnerable groups in the affected areas.
7. WASH assessments should not overburden the population and collect any more information than is required. Effort should be made to ensure that assessments are well coordinated and affected refugee populations are not visited on multiple occasions by different agencies asking for the same information.

8. Assessment surveys should be carried out with a properly designed survey instrument, a sampling plan, and a sample size calculation. No more data should be collected than absolutely necessary. **Additional assessments should be undertaken only when there is inadequate secondary data.** In this case, the assessments should be conducted only to ensure that data gaps are covered.
9. To facilitate comparison and consistency, WASH actors should use common data collection tools, methodologies, indicators and operational datasets (agreed common population names, population sizes, and administrative boundaries). A common approach is essential to ensure that the data collected can be compared, contrasted, and compiled into a single database for shared analysis. In ideal settings, these tools and methodologies would have been developed and finalised as part of ongoing WASH preparedness activities.

WASH assessments in emergencies

10. Standard multisector assessment tools for emergencies, such as [Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment \(MIRA\)](#) and [Needs assessment for refugee emergencies \(NARE\)](#), include WASH data. Depending on the context, these data collection methods are usually the first implemented in an emergency. WASH stakeholders, including humanitarian actors and government counterparts, should be involved in these data collection exercises. The data collected using these tools should be useful for the first emergency response.
11. If additional information is required for the ongoing response, specific rapid WASH assessments should then be carried out. Refer to the [Rapid Methods for Assessing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene](#) for more information.
12. Additional rapid WASH assessments may be carried out either as part of a multi-sectoral assessment with other life-saving sectors (typically shelter, protection, nutrition and health) or as a separate WASH rapid assessment.
13. The data collected during any additional rapid WASH assessments should be processed. The assessment team should meet and prioritise the findings into those needs that are lifesaving and should be met immediately and those that need a medium-term approach.
14. Rapid WASH assessments may be followed up with comprehensive WASH assessments, which are typically carried out within the three months with a similar methodology to the rapid WASH assessment but in greater depth and over a longer period of time (typically several days).
15. After understanding the existing WASH data gaps and needs, the development of WASH assessments should include an analytical framework and analysis plan, with key questions, indicators and topics. This ensures only the necessary data is collected and minimises the resources that are invested in the process.

16. Assessments may use a variety of qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numerical) tools such as:

- ◆ Key informant interviews.
- ◆ Focus group discussions (gender and age segregated).
- ◆ Rapid household surveys.
- ◆ Observation walk.
- ◆ Assessment of existing WASH infrastructure and services.
- ◆ Assessment of existing WASH management arrangements.

Immediate assessment of potential refugee hosting areas

17. In parallel with the assessment of the refugee needs, it will be necessary to carry out an immediate assessment of potential refugee hosting areas. This process should be carried out in close collaboration with national Government, local authorities, and settlement planning experts.
18. UNHCR advocates for forcibly displaced people to be able to settle along hosting communities, enjoy freedom of movement, access local services and be included in development plans. Formal settlements and camps should be considered as a last resort. When they are unavoidable, the feasibility of developing new settlements in a given site should be carefully analysed.
19. In line with Sustainable Responses and Inclusion from the Start approaches, the suitability of any site should be assessed against existing services that could be expanded, upgraded or strengthened (preferred site development modality), rather than establish parallel systems (least preferred modality and only to be considered as last resort).
20. When large numbers of refugees have crossed a border, adequate provision of WASH services will be in line with people's onward movements and decisions on where to settle. The response would thus be context specific and in alignment with the overall multi-sectoral response. UNHCR's Emergency Handbook [Shelter, Camp and Settlement](#) provides further guidance.
21. When the establishment of formal settlements cannot be avoided, their location will be critical to guarantee the highest level of refugee inclusion and self-reliance from the very beginning. Normally the [site selection](#) is done in close coordination with the National and Local Governments: technical experts (like WASH) should be deeply involved and inform UNHCR leadership on any gap or challenge before confirming the final location. This process should be informed by clear and accurate technical information, and often most importantly from the WASH Sector with regard to access to water at the proposed sites, and potential challenges with provision of sanitation at the proposed sites, including flood risks.
22. WASH assessments at potential refugee hosting areas should consider the following key elements:
- ◆ Existing or proposed development plans into which a refugee WASH response could plug.

- ◆ Access to existing services and infrastructure, including the national power grid, sewage or stormwater system, solid waste collection system and safe location for collection and disposal of solid waste.
- ◆ Topography and drainage, including soil condition and type, permeability/collapsibility and drainage patterns for sanitation options (where relevant).
- ◆ Water source and environmental sanitation, including accessibility to sustainable and sufficient water sources, potential sources of contaminants, potential impacts on downstream users and depth to water table.
- ◆ Climatic conditions, environment, public health, and natural hazards, including history of flooding, proximity to protected areas, presence of vulnerable species, presence of chemical environmental hazards.
- ◆ Land use and land rights.
- ◆ Screening of environment and climate hazards, using tools such as [NEAT+](#).
- ◆ Screening of markets, or use pre-existing market assessments to support CBI, where appropriate. [UNHCRs Multi-sector Market Assessment Companion Guide and Toolkit](#) provides guidance and tools.
- ◆ Regulatory environment for water sources.
- ◆ National standards for water access, and an understanding of local service levels for the host community.
- ◆ Protection considerations.

Box 5: Principles for rapid assessments

- i). Involve all groups, particularly persons with specific needs, in the assessment to identify potential areas or issues needing immediate attention.
- ii). Explain the objectives and purpose of the assessment to the respondents (be they refugees, hosting communities, and/or local leaders/authorities) to ensure their participation. Explain and ensure that all information will remain confidential.
- iii). Try to obtain responses from different sources whenever possible. Do not ask questions if you already know the answer from another source unless this is to confirm the information.
- iv). Obtain consent from all adult participants in any activity and inform them that they can refuse to take part in the assessment without negative consequences. Obtain consent from parent or guardian for the children participants.
- v). Respect the dignity and self-worth of individuals at all times.
- vi). Report incidents immediately to the protection focal point (see Protection incident reporting).

Source: [Joint Assessment Missions: A Practical Guide](#)

WASH Assessment Guidance and Tools

23. Assessments are generally based around the following five key steps. Additional guidance is provided in the [UNHCR Programme Handbook](#).

- ◆ Identify resources and compile assessment plan
- ◆ Collect data
- ◆ Analyse and interpret
- ◆ Report conclusions
- ◆ Design / modify interventions

Identify resources and compile assessment plans

24. This step includes developing an assessment team, identification of assessment locations, development of an assessment schedule and budget and identification of required resources (data collection tools, transport etc);

25. Assessment team composition: Independent multi-sectoral teams can cover more efficiently multiple locations to assess. Ideally assessments will be carried out in conjunction with settlement Planners and Protection colleagues. Team composition may be based on the following:

Team Member	Proposed Activities
WASH Specialist	Engineering Assessment, Sanitary Survey, Key Informant Interviews (KII)
Settlement Planner	Settlement Assessment, KII
Hygiene/Health Specialist	Focus Group Discussions (FGD), KII
Protection Specialist	FGD, KII
Local Community Representative	Guide/Introductions Assist with KII/FGD

26. The team members should include both women and men; to the extent possible, the WASH assessment team should include at least one

representative of the relevant local authority (Region / Provincial / District, as appropriate) for WASH issues. As relevant, national entities should be fully informed of the planned assessment and its purpose.

27. At all stages the reliability of the information being collected should be assessed according to the following categories:

- ◆ **Somewhat Reliable:** Reasonable but questionable source, method or time relevance of data
- ◆ **Reliable:** From a reliable source, using scientific method and data reflecting current or projected conditions.
- ◆ **Very Reliable:** Effectively unquestioned source, method and time relevance of data.

28. **Identification of assessment locations:** Typically, assessments may be required at border crossing points, way stations, transit centres, reception centres and urban locations where refugees may settle for the longer term. The assessment format will need to be adjusted depending on whether refugees are already resident at the site/within the locality, or if it is a future planned site/locality where refugees are not yet resident.

Data collection

29. **Key informant interviews:** Key informants should be selected based on **their** specific knowledge of hardware or software aspects of the site/locality or WASH programme. During the needs assessment, the assessor should try to collect information from as many different sources as possible ensuring gender balance overall, and should try to triangulate the information to ensure it is correct. [The UNHCR WASH Assessment Primer Questions](#) can be helpful to guide the conversation. Note that it is often useful to interview men and women separately as women may not feel able to speak or be honest in front of men.

30. **Focus group discussions:** Focus group discussions may be used to gather information about social and cultural preferences and practices, or to facilitate feedback on proposed technical solutions. [The UNHCR WASH Assessment Primer Questions](#) can be helpful to guide the conversation. When undertaking focus group discussions, WASH actors should try to observe the following considerations:

- ◆ Females should facilitate female FGDs.
- ◆ Select focus group members who can contribute to the topic under discussion.
- ◆ Try to limit the numbers to a maximum of eight participants.
- ◆ Use a note taker so that the facilitator can remain engaged.
- ◆ Encourage all voices, respect all answers.
- ◆ Listen as much as possible and speak as little as possible.
- ◆ Respect the time of participants and limit the session duration to 30 minutes.

31. **Rapid household surveys:** Data collected from individual households provides a critical snapshot of the current WASH conditions experienced by a representative sample of refugee households.

32. In order to be able to cover as many households as possible during the emergency site visit the number of questions in the UNHCR rapid household survey tool has been kept to the absolute minimum essential WASH indicators. The aim is that the rapid household survey tool should take no more than 5 minutes to complete at every household. Questions in the rapid household survey tool include:

a. **Water:**

- ◆ Where do you collect water for drinking and other household uses?
- ◆ How much drinking water was collected the previous day?
- ◆ How many people in this household? (allows the calculation of per capita water consumption, and per capita water storage)
- ◆ How much water storage capacity does the household have?
- ◆ Observation of condition of water storage containers.

b. **Sanitation:**

- ◆ Where do you go to defecate?
- ◆ Observation of condition of toilet or defecation area?

c. **Hygiene:**

- ◆ Where do you go to bathe/shower/wash?
- ◆ Observation of condition of shower/bathing area.
- ◆ Does the household have access to soap? (directly observe the presence of soap within 1 minute)
- ◆ Self-reported occurrence of watery diarrhoea within the household in the last week?

33. UNHCR's [Rapid Methods for Assessing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Services in Emergency Settings](#) provides guidance for sampling and sampling size calculations.

34. **Observation walks:** An observation walk of the refugee hosting areas does not have to take long, and can easily be incorporated into the general assessment schedule. For safety and security reasons it should generally be undertaken using a member of the refugee population as a guide, and if appropriate one from the hosting community. This also allows the possibility to pose questions and collect first-hand information about problems and solutions. Try to obtain an even balance of places the guide wants to show you and places they may not want you to see.

Assessment of existing WASH infrastructure conditions

35. Assessment of the condition and serviceability of existing WASH infrastructure is an essential part of any needs assessment especially in contexts where there is insufficient or aging infrastructure (for example in urban contexts or dispersed settings). When assessing existing WASH infrastructure, it is essential to assess each step of the water supply, excreta disposal, or solid waste, chain from point of origin to point of use/reuse/disposal. At each step, the key characteristics and condition of the infrastructure and resources should be noted, along with risks to public health, and corrective actions to bring the system back into serviceability.

Some large-scale WASH infrastructure can be complex to assess and may require specialized expertise, in close consultation with local authorities.

36. During the infrastructure assessment, it is essential to logically record details of what is observed using appropriate available equipment and forms.

Detailed assessment of new settlements

37. Potential water sources - specialist expertise is generally essential to identify and evaluate potential new water sources for refugee settings. For groundwater sources a detailed hydrogeological survey should be undertaken prior to drilling, and for surface water sources a detailed study considering seasonal variations in flow volume, turbidity, water quality and other relevant factors should be completed prior to design of the abstraction system and treatment plant. These assessments are typically carried out in collaboration with UNHCR's settlement planning section. It is also very important to also consider the human aspects of water sources when undertaking assessments, particularly to understand who the existing users are, who owns the land, risks for the environment and for conflict with the host community if the source is to be used for refugee populations.
38. Sanitation considerations - assessment of ground conditions including soil type (rocky, sandy, clay), soil strength, and soil permeability (percolation test) should be undertaken by digging test pits in various locations across the site, this will normally require specialist equipment and expertise that may anyway be available locally (e.g. via local universities or local authorities).
39. Environmental considerations – flood and drought risk modelling may be necessary, preferably using dedicated expertise available locally.

Assessment of existing WASH management arrangements

40. Assessment of the existing management arrangements (e.g. who owns, takes care of, and pays for existing WASH infrastructure) is an essential part of any needs assessment especially in contexts where there is aging or inadequate infrastructure. When assessing WASH infrastructure management arrangements, it is essential to describe WHO does WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and HOW for each separate part of the water, excreta management, waste, hygiene, or disease vector control activities. At each step, the key characteristics and condition of the management of activities being undertaken (including any transportation, labour, fuel, spare parts and consumable needs) should be noted. Some large-scale WASH infrastructure can be complex to assess and may require specialized expertise.

Assessment of existing WASH legislation

41. UNHCR and WASH actors should be aware of existing national legislation concerning water supply, excreta management, hygiene, solid waste, disease vector control, and drainage, and align its WASH response to these to the extent possible and as much as relevant. The best way to rapidly assess and understand existing legislation and practice is to involve local experts and authorities in the assessment process as early as possible. During the emergency phases it may be possible to get exemptions to

existing legislation for short term interventions, in light of the live saving nature of WASH responses.

Institutional capacity assessments

42. It is important to assess the capacity and needs of WASH service providers and local WASH authorities along with what additional priority support they may need to carry out their roles. An institutional capacity assessment is a useful exercise to achieve this. To get the best results from the capacity assessment process, it is important that this activity is undertaken with a view towards inclusion of refugee WASH services with host community WASH service management structures at the earliest stage. In order to achieve this, a review of the following with the service providers is helpful:

- ◆ WASH equipment ages, types, capacities and conditions.
- ◆ WASH infrastructure ages, types, capacities and conditions.
- ◆ Human resources structure (organigram) including technical and managerial capacity and experience
- ◆ Fleet maintenance and logistics capacity
- ◆ Operational budgets

43. Development actors should be primary support to assess institutional capacity and strengthen, as needed.

WASH Assessment Analysis and Reporting

Analysis of assessment findings and development of a WASH action plan

44. The analysis process aims to organise, review, synthesise and interpret the information collected throughout the WASH assessment process. An analysis plan should be used to outline how information collected will be utilised. The final output of the analysis process will be key to adjust the WASH response in the short and medium term in terms of WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHO and HOW MUCH.

45. Assessment findings can be shared in UNHCR's [Comprehensive Overview of the Response to Emergencies \(CORE\)](#), which are recognisable, predictable and consistent information products that are publicly released in the first months of a declared refugee emergency response.

Suggested format of a comprehensive WASH assessment report

46. Below is a proposed template for a comprehensive WASH assessment report.

- a. **Executive Summary:** key background information, needs identified and recommendations.
- b. **Introduction:** Background to comprehensive WASH assessment, objectives, why the assessment was conducted, overview of current situation, what the assessment aimed to achieve.
- c. **Methodology:** How the assessment was conducted, where (the geographic location), the target population, when, which methods and tools were used.

- d. **Limitations and challenges:** Description of any problems faced in achieving the overall objectives of the WASH assessment.
- e. **Findings:**
- ◆ Overall picture of the refugee situation: origin, number, sites, surrounding community relations.
 - ◆ Context: brief overview of the humanitarian context.
 - ◆ Key findings (organised geographically per site and by WASH thematic area). In particular the key findings should describe:
 - Will the refugee hosting area require a centralized or decentralized water supply solution?
 - Will the water supply solution be integrated into local infrastructure or will it be stand-alone?
 - Are the soil and groundwater conditions suitable for on-site sanitation?
 - What will be the big WASH ticket items?
- f. **Needs and gaps:** how current assistance is addressing the WASH needs in addition to any WASH gaps. This section can also include any likely future scenarios and evolution of needs, as well as planned or ongoing support from development actors that could greatly contribute to meeting existing WASH needs and gaps.
- g. **Conclusions and recommendations:** This section should summarise the main conclusions of the WASH assessment and likely evolution of the situation in the short and medium term.
- h. **Recommended activities:** Description of the WASH short- and medium-term action plans in terms of Who, What, Where and How.
- i. **Annexes:**
- ◆ ToR.
 - ◆ Detailed statistics.
 - ◆ Maps.
 - ◆ Participants (including names of organisations and individuals).
 - ◆ List of secondary data sources analysed.
 - ◆ List of sites visited, people met, FGD held, key informants interviewed.
 - ◆ Copies of data collection tools used (key informant primer sheets, rapid household survey questionnaires, sanitary survey tools, etc).

Box 6: Essential WASH assessment questions for planning refugee responses - KII

General questions

- How many displaced women, men, children and families are present?
- Is the number of refugees increasing, staying the same, or decreasing?

Water availability

- From where are water supplies currently being collected?
- How far are these sources? Who owns these sources? Are there alternatives?
- What is the average number of refugees per water collection point?
- How much water is being collected per household per day?
- How much water storage capacity does each household have?
- Are the water supplies protected from contamination?
- Is there sufficient yield / quantity? Are supplies reliable / available all day / year?
- What is the quality of these water sources? Are they chlorinated?
- What resources do families have for treating water?

Excreta management

- What is the current defecation practice? Is there a designated area?
- Is the current defecation practice a threat to water supplies or living areas?
- Are there existing toilets? If so, are they used, are they sufficient and are they operating successfully? Are they segregated by sex? Can they be improved?
- Would the population be willing to share or are communal toilets preferred?
- What local materials are available for constructing toilets?
- Is there sufficient space toilets? What is the slope of the terrain?
- Are soil conditions suitable for on-site disposal? What is the groundwater level?
- What do people use for anal cleaning? Are there sufficient materials available?
- Is there water available for anal cleansing, flushing or hand-washing?
- How did people manage excreta before the emergency?
- Do men / women / children feel safe using facilities? Do the toilet doors lock?

Solid waste management

- How is solid waste currently managed? What sorts of wastes are being created?
- Are there designated collection points? How frequently is waste collected?
- Are there any festering wastes or uncontrolled dumping of wastes?
- Are waste practices a threat to water supplies or living areas?
- How are hazardous wastes managed? Where are these wastes situated?
- Are any organisations responsible for waste collection and disposal?
- What resources (excavators / trucks / staff) do they have?
- Are there landfill sites? Who owns the sites? Are they operating successfully?
- Is there sufficient space for a landfill? What is the slope of the terrain? What is the level of the groundwater table? Are geological conditions suitable for landfill?

Hygiene

- Is soap available for hand washing and laundering?
- How and where are children's faeces disposed?
- What is the condition of water storage containers? Is water stored safely?
- Is food stored and prepared safely?
- Are there areas for bathing, clothes laundering and airing? Are they segregated?
- Do current facilities offer sufficient levels of privacy and security?
- Do women have a place to soak/wash/dry/dispose MHM materials with dignity?
- Would people be willing to share bathing facilities?

Vector control

- Are there problems with flies, lice, fleas, ticks, rodents, or mosquitoes?
- Is household waste covered daily with at least 20cm soil cover?
- Are there problems of stagnant water or blocked ditches?

Note: The list of questions is not exhaustive and is merely intended as an *aide memoire*.

5. WASH Monitoring and Reporting

Regular monitoring is essential to understand how well UNHCR is implementing its WASH interventions and achieving its planned results. Reporting of WASH programmes is necessary so that all actors, including refugees themselves, can understand the progress that is being made through WASH activities.

Establishment of the routine monitoring of WASH indicators

1. Routine monitoring of the UNHCR WASH indicators should be started immediately during the emergency phase and continued until a durable solution has been reached for the refugee population. This is regardless of the context (emergency, protracted, formal or informal settlements, collective or transit centres etc).
2. WASH programmes should also monitor the rate of change of key WASH indicators to clearly show trends over-time. During the initial response period, the coverage of water points, toilets, showers, water containers, hygiene kits, access to sanitary protection materials, underwear and soap should be regularly monitored. If the scale-up rates show that targets will not be met on-time, the need for additional financial, material, and human resources should be promptly flagged.
3. UNHCR undertakes both implementation monitoring and results monitoring. A small number of indicators are included in both processes (access to water services, household toilets), with greater frequency for implementation monitoring.
4. If WASH services are provided by a third party, monitoring should focus on monitoring household practices, versus the activities of the third party.

Implementation monitoring

5. Implementation monitoring helps to understand how well the execution of projects undertaken by funded partners and by UNHCR with a direct implementation (DI) budget is progressing. Implementation monitoring involves:
 - ◆ Monitoring the progress of projects.
 - ◆ Assessing the availability and quality of services and/or delivered goods.
 - ◆ Analysing financial trends against the required and available budget.
 - ◆ Verifying the progress of funded partners.
 - ◆ Monitoring the compliance of funded partners.

- ◆ Monitoring the compliance of contractors or vendors with their contractual obligations.
6. WASH Implementation monitoring includes monthly access data, household data and that for communal facilities.
 7. WASH Results managers lead implementation monitoring activities and are supported by information management and M&E personnel. More information on implementation monitoring can be found in Section 4 “GET” of the UNHCR Programme Handbook (unpublished, internal only).

Technical Information Management System

8. UNHCR uses [Technical Information Management System](#) (TIMS) to manage and analyse implementation data collected in refugee operations as well as monitor trends in key water, sanitation and hygiene indicators at household and community levels.
9. For TIMS, each user has a username and an assigned level of responsibility such as admin, editor, viewer, and technician. Users can request access by contacting hqtims@unhcr.org or by contacting the WASH unit in UNHCR headquarters. WASH indicator data is entered directly into TIMS by the WASH partner (or UNHCR WASH Officer) at country or settlement level.
10. As a minimum, the UNHCR key WASH ‘access indicators’ should be measured monthly and ‘household indicators’ measured annually. The current version of the core UNHCR WASH Indicators and Standards are listed in Table 9. Updated indicators are maintained at [WASH in Emergencies](#).
11. Current and historical WASH indicator data can be accessed in TIMS. Progress against indicators can be visualized over time and comparisons can be made between different sites and countries.

Monitoring WASH ‘Access Indicators’ using the Monthly Report Card

12. ‘Access Indicators’, as listed in Table 9, should be monitored and recorded on a monthly basis using the UNHCR Monthly Report Card (MRC) in [TIMS](#). Detailed instructions on the use of TIMS functions are available to registered users ([user guide](#)) via the TIMS website.

Monitoring WASH ‘Household Indicators’ using the Standardised KAP Survey

13. ‘Household Indicators’, as listed in Table 9, should be monitored on an annual basis using the standardised UNHCR Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey and the results recorded in TIMS. WASH actors should aim to carry out an initial KAP baseline survey within the first 6 months of the emergency and then at least once a year (ideally twice if there are distinct rainy and dry seasons). Results from the KAP survey should be used to assist in the modification of the WASH activities, in particular the

hygiene promotion aspects. The KAP Survey Manual can be found at [Key WASH Resources](#) and includes critical WASH questions and a description of several scientifically robust representative sampling methodologies.

Monitoring WASH at communal facilities

14. In collaboration with education colleagues, the access and quantity of water quantity and access to latrines/toilets at education facilities are regularly monitored and reported through the Energy and WASH Survey in Schools and analysed through TIMS.
15. In collaboration with health colleagues, access and quantity of water quantity and access to latrines/toilets at health care facilities are regularly monitored and reported through the Health Facility Balance Score Card (BSC) and analysed through TIMS.

Table 9: UNHCR WASH Indicators and Standards

Indicator	Unit	Standard		Means of Verification
		Emergency	Basic	
Water Quantity				
Average volume of potable water available	litres per person per day	7.5-15	20+	MRC
Average volume of potable water collected at household level	litres per person per day	≥ 15	≥ 20	KAP
Households with at least 10 litres/person potable water storage capacity	%	≥ 70	≥ 80	KAP
Schools: average volume of potable water	litres per pupil per day	3		Energy & WASH in Schools
Health clinic/nutrition feeding centre: average volume of potable water	litres per outpatient per day	10		Health Facility BSC
Health clinic/nutrition feeding centre: average volume of potable water	litres per inpatient bed per day	50		Health Facility BSC
Water Access				
Maximum distance from household to potable water collection point	meters	≤ 500m	≤ 200m	Mapping
Access to usable hand pump/well/spring	persons per usable hand pump/well/spring	≤ 500	≤ 250	MRC
Access to usable water tap	persons per usable water tap	≤ 250	≤ 100	MRC

Schools: access to usable handpump/well	pupils per usable handpump/well	≤ 400		Energy & WASH in Schools
Schools: access to usable tap	pupil per usable tap	≤ 200		Energy & WASH in Schools
Health clinics/nutrition feeding centre: separated water point	water points/facility	1		Health Facility BSC
Water Quality				
Households collecting drinking water from protected/treated sources	%	≥ 70	≥ 95	KAP
Water quality tests at non chlorinated water collection locations with 0 CFU/100ml	%	≥ 95	≥ 95	MRC
Water quality tests at chlorinated collection locations with free residual chlorine in the range 0.2-2mg/L and turbidity <5NTU	%	≥ 95	≥ 95	MRC
Sanitation				
Access to toilet	Number of persons per toilet	≤ 50	5 or one household	MRC
Households with household toilet	%	-	≥ 85	KAP/MRC
Households reporting defecating in a toilet	%	≥ 60	≥ 85	KAP
Access to bath shelter/shower	persons per bath shelter/shower	≤ 50	5 or one household	MRC
Schools: access to toilet	pupils per toilet	50 (30 girls per toilet, 60 boys per toilet – add urinals for boys)	50 (30 girls per toilet, 60 boys per toilet – add urinals for boys)	Energy & WASH in Schools
Health clinics/nutrition feeding centres: access to toilet	patients per toilet	20 outpatients per toilet 10 inpatients per toilet	20 outpatients per toilet 10 inpatients per toilet	Health Facility BSC

Hygiene Promotion				
Number of persons per hygiene promoter	persons per hygiene promoter	≤ 500	≤ 1000	MRC
Households with access to soap	%	≥ 70	≥ 90	KAP
Women of reproductive age who are satisfied with menstrual hygiene management materials and facilities	%	≥ 70%	≥ 90%	KAP
Solid Waste Management				
Households with access to solid waste disposal facility	%	≥ 70	≥ 90	KAP

NB: Where appropriate the standards should be adapted based on context or existing national standards.

Mapping WASH infrastructure

16. Simple mapping of WASH facilities (for example water points, toilets, bathing cubicles, solid waste collection points) can help obtain a clear snapshot of coverage and conditions. Colours may be used to plot WASH facilities in green if they are functional, yellow if they have minor issues, and red if there is an issue for immediate attention. These simple geographical information systems can also be shared with the health programme to investigate the linkages between disease, where patients reside, and poor access to WASH services. Maps are particularly useful to analyse disease outbreak data (case mapping), and to determine gaps in WASH service coverage.

Monitoring the cost effectiveness and efficiency of WASH interventions

17. The monitoring of WASH expenditure per refugee allows different refugee settings to be compared and can also be used to explain why indicators are not achieved in some settings due to a lack of funding. The monitoring of WASH expenditure can also highlight locations that are not making efficient use of resources.

18. UNHCR and WASH actors could also monitor the cost and efficiency of all WASH interventions over time. Key value-for-money indicators include:

- ◆ The cost of water supply (per cubic meter and per refugee).
- ◆ The cost of excreta management (per cubic meter and per refugee).

19. In addition to monitoring costs, UNHCR and WASH actors should also monitor and maximise the productivity of WASH programmes. WASH programmes typically employ a large number of staff (e.g. construction teams, operation and maintenance teams, hygiene promoters, cleaners, waste collection team), vehicles (e.g. waste collection vehicles, water tankers, maintenance pick-ups), and machines (e.g. water pumps, water treatment machines, sludge pumps). Small changes in how these assets operate can result in increases in efficiency. Basic log sheets should be used

to monitor how vehicles, machines and staff are working. For example, water tankers, or waste vehicles may be logged to measure how many return trips are being carried out per shift, how much time is spent waiting, loading, collecting, or transporting.

20. Infrastructure break-down rates (in particularly programmes that use handpumps for water supply), and spare-parts replacement rates should be closely tracked to ensure that strategies to reduce breakdown frequency and replacement are functioning (and to identify irregularities and increasing frequency in breakdown rates and spare-part replacement). A core break-down indicator is percentage reliability (number of functioning days/total operating days).
21. All data collected by the WASH programme should be collected with a purpose to inform decisions and improve the performance and cost-efficiency of the programme. This is to move to a cost-efficient model that may be handed over to the refugee population or local authorities.
22. Monitoring should also be undertaken on protection and accountability issues, particularly feelings of safety, privacy and usability of facilities. Particular care should be taken to obtain feedback from women, girls, older people and people from marginalised or vulnerable groups. This monitoring should be undertaken in collaboration with protection colleagues. See Chapter 2 for more details.

Results monitoring

23. Results monitoring provides evidence of progress towards the planned outputs, outcomes and impacts of the Global Results Framework (unpublished, internal only).
24. This involves reviewing and monitoring WASH-related results indicators in the operation's multi-year results framework, as well as reviewing community feedback, and resources. This can also include monitoring WASH-related indicators in other frameworks that UNHCR is obliged to report against, including monitoring requirements for Refugee Response Plans (RRPs, unpublished, internal only), [Humanitarian Response Plans](#) (HRPs) and the [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#) (UNSDCF). Results monitoring informs course correction and helps determine necessary adjustments to WASH programming.
25. WASH Results managers lead results monitoring activities, supported by information management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) personnel. More information on results monitoring can be found in Section 3 "GET" of the UNHCR Programme Handbook (unpublished, internal only).
26. WASH is an integral part of UNHCR's results architecture, which includes results indicators at impact, outcome and output level with three sets of indicators to balance global coherence with local needs: core, good practice and user-defined indicators. More information on results frameworks and

using results indicators can be found in Section 5 “PLAN” of the UNHCR Programme Handbook (unpublished, internal only).

27. **Core indicators:** These standard indicators provide comparable and consistent data on the results achieved with UNHCR’s support. They are UNHCR’s flagship results indicators and play a key role in external reporting, resource mobilization, and advocacy. UNHCR uses WASH-related core indicators under global results impact area 2: Realising Rights in Safe Environments and outcome area 12: Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, as summarized in Table 10.
28. Monitoring and reporting against these core indicators is mandatory for operations and follows definitions and methodologies outlined in indicator guidance (unpublished, internal only). Core impact and outcome indicators are reported on an annual basis, while output indicators are reported twice a year.
29. Since achieving changes at impact and outcome level requires a collective effort beyond UNHCR and funded partners, impact and outcome results monitoring focuses on all forcibly displaced and stateless people, not solely those targeted by UNHCR programmes. Core impact indicator 2.2 and core outcome indicators 12.1 and 12.2 are usually measured through Results Monitoring Surveys (unpublished, internal only) to understand the WASH context beyond the interventions of UNHCR and funded partners. This serves as an evidence base for multi-year strategic planning, programming and advocacy efforts. The RMS are household level surveys with context-appropriate methodological approaches and a standard questionnaire that is tailored to the specific country operation.
30. Results monitoring for outputs, on the other hand, focuses only the population assisted by UNHCR and funded partners.
31. **Good practice indicators:** Operations are recommended to use these indicators when relevant to their results framework and applicable to their work. Using good practice indicators allows global coherence in results reporting across the organisation. UNHCR uses the good practice indicators under global results area 12: Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, as summarized in Table 10.
32. **User-defined indicators:** Operations may develop these to measure context-specific results, only when core or good practice indicators do not adequately capture the results in the results framework. Additionally, they may be used to incorporate indicators from other stakeholders into UNHCR’s framework, for example, indicators from national, donor, and inter-agency frameworks like the SDG targets, UNSDCF, HRPs and RRP.

Table 10: UNHCR core and good practice indicators

Results Level	Indicator
Core indicators	
Impact	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities
Outcome	12.1 Proportion of people using at least basic drinking water services
Outcome	12.2 Proportion of people with access to a safe household toilet
Output	12.1.1 Number of people supported with access to water and/or sanitation services
Good practice indicators	
Outcome	Average number of litres of potable water available per person per day
Outcome	Number of persons per latrine/toilet
Outcome	Proportion of recipients who are satisfied with menstrual hygiene management and facilities
Output	Number of household toilets/latrines constructed
Output	Number of people supported with access to sustainably produced water
Output	Adequate measures put in place by the WASH sector to address GBV risks identified by women and girls

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