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# WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) IN EMERGENCIES

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People affected by crises are more susceptible to illness and death from disease, particularly diarrhoeal and infectious diseases. Such diseases are strongly related to inadequate sanitation and water supplies and poor hygiene. WASH programmes aim to reduce public health risks. The main pathways for pathogens to infect humans are faeces, fluids, fingers, flies and food. The main objective of WASH programmes in humanitarian response is to reduce public health risks by creating barriers along those pathways.

According to studies there is evidence of impact of WASH on the nutritional status compared with WASH and the incidence of diarrhoea or soil-transmitted helminth infections. For example, observational studies have found associations between the frequency of open defecation and prevalence of stunting. This confirms the need for integrated WASH interventions within our programmes to work towards our organisational strategy.

## Definitions

**WASH** is a collective term for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. The main WASH sub-sectors are grouped together within the WASH sector to signify they are complimentary and inter-dependent, for example, open defecation can contaminate water sources or poor waste management can attract rodents and flies (vectors)

which can spread disease. Emergency WASH interventions can include a wide range of activities from the provision of rapid and limited interventions during acute emergencies, for example, water trucking and distribution of water purification tablets to long-term interventions in complex or protracted emergencies, for example, the rehabilitation of piped networks and water treatment plants.

## Standards

The aim of having standards is to provide a minimum quality of Welthungerhilfe's actions during an emergency response; to safeguard a coordinated response with other actors and to be held accountable for the action. The [Humanitarian Charter](#) and Protection Principles provide the ethical and legal basis and the SPHERE Standards provide the technical minimum standards in emergencies. The Protection Principles and the minimum standards for WASH interventions in humanitarian response are listed in [The SPHERE Handbook](#).

All Global Wash Cluster (GWC) partners have agreed that [5 minimum commitments](#) should be observed in all their humanitarian WASH programmes to ensure that the distinct assistance and protection needs of the affected population are met. There is significant overlap between these 5 minimum commitments and the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) (CHS) which draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and com-

mitments. Welthungerhilfe has committed to using the Core Humanitarian Standards, as a guiding standard for humanitarian response.

## Welthungerhilfe Focus

### Fields of Interventions

The main WASH components are Water Supply, Excreta Disposal, Hygiene Promotion, Solid Waste Management, Vector Control and Prevention and Control of Disease Outbreaks. These components cover a broad range of activities e.g. under Water Supply (water supply, storage and distribution, water treatment); Excreta Disposal (construction and maintenance of latrines, wastewater treatment and disposal); Hygiene Promotion (maintenance of facilities, hygiene education, behav-

ioral change, handwashing, provision of hygiene kits). Solid Waste Management (waste collection, recycling, composting, incineration); Vector Control (fly traps, residual spraying, fumigation) and Prevention and Control of Disease Outbreaks (distribution of mosquito nets, ORS, disinfection). This is not an exhaustive list of possible activities. Within such a large range of possible interventions, Welthungerhilfe focuses on the needs of people affected by the disaster while keeping our overall organisational strategy in mind.

Based on our organisational strategy and mandate, Welthungerhilfe prioritises and has core competencies in the sub-sectors listed in **Table 1**. Welthungerhilfe will advocate on behalf of affected populations, collaborate, coordinate, lobby and partner with other humanitarian

Hygiene Promotion	Water Supply	Excreta Disposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All facilities and resources provided reflect the vulnerabilities, needs, and preferences of the affected population, especially girls and women.</li> <li>■ Users are involved in the design, management and maintenance of hygiene facilities where possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All people have safe and equitable access to a sufficient quantity of water for drinking, cooking, and personal and domestic hygiene. Public water points are sufficiently close to households to enable use of minimum water requirement.</li> <li>■ Water is palatable, and of sufficient quality to be drunk and used for personal and domestic hygiene without causing significant risk to health.</li> <li>■ All people should have adequate facilities and supplies to collect, store, and use sufficient quantities of water, and to ensure drinking water remains safe.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ People have adequate numbers of toilets, sufficiently close to their dwellings to allow them rapid, safe and acceptable access at all times of the day and night.</li> <li>■ Toilets are sited, designed, constructed and maintained to be comfortable, hygienic and safe to use.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Competencies required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identification, selection and distribution of culturally adapted hygiene items (NFIs)</li> <li>■ Skills for ensuring community participation and dialogue with WASH stakeholders</li> <li>■ Representative monitoring of activities and outcomes on hygiene promotion</li> <li>■ Coordinating with health actors which monitor incidences of WASH related diseases</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competencies required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct accurate water quality assessment and analysis</li> <li>■ Large Scale Water Storage (rapid installation tanks e.g. T90s)</li> <li>■ Piped system design and distribution e.g. installation of tap stands</li> <li>■ Water trucking</li> <li>■ Bulk water treatment</li> <li>■ Locating and accessing groundwater in emergencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competencies required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Faecal sludge transport and disposal</li> <li>■ Operation &amp; Maintenance and decommissioning latrines</li> <li>■ Assess latrine options for effective disposal of wastewater, design, implement and ensure O&amp;M</li> </ul>
<p><b>Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Health benefits may not be the key motivation for changing hygiene behaviour. The need for privacy, safety, convenience, social status, and esteem may be stronger driving forces.</li> <li>■ During public health disease outbreaks (cholera, typhoid), Welthungerhilfe will look for alliances with Health partners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Welthungerhilfe would seek partnerships to provide and operate water purification plants in urban contexts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Emergency sanitation in urban contexts is challenging. There is a lack of technical capacity in the sector. Welthungerhilfe will seek alliances and partnerships in these contexts.</li> </ul>

Table 1: Welthungerhilfe WASH in Emergency Priority Interventions.

agencies to address other unmet needs in the WASH sector. Note that the competencies listed in table 1 are not an exhaustive list. Also note that other WASH components are never excluded and can be implemented when the need and/or gap is there.

## Assessments

In an emergency, a major challenge is the validation, compilation and analysis of assessment information to scope the crisis and identify priority actions. Whenever possible and operationally appropriate, Welthungerhilfe will work through Clusters to define and organise joint or harmonised assessments. This can greatly facilitate the process of informing intra/inter-sectoral planning. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has developed an Operational Guidance Note for Coordinated Assessments found on its [website](#).

On the general principles for assessments, refer to the Welthungerhilfe Humanitarian Brief on “Assessments in Emergencies”.

## Targeting

- **Blanket, specific targeting, affected people & hosts:** Welthungerhilfe operations should be flexible and responsive to the needs of affected populations. Targeting should be based understanding of context, vulnerabilities and capacities of affected people and hosts.
- **Vulnerable groups:** In an emergency, people who are particularly vulnerable and at risk must be identified. These include refugees, IDPs, children, HIV/AIDS infected, elderly people and persons with disabilities. Pregnant and lactating women, young children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are to be specifically focused on in terms WASH interventions. Special attention will be given to **children under 2** and **pregnant and lactating women** to prevent irreversible effects on [child development](#) and to protect the health of concerned women.

## Intervention Modality

The distribution of WASH Non-Food-Items (NFIs) should not be our default response to WASH emergencies. Often, the distribution of NFIs does not meet the needs of affected populations, distorts the local market and the items distributed become monetized i.e. sold to raise cash. Market-based responses to WASH emergencies are increasingly gaining traction as an efficient and effective means of responding. Implementing market-based interventions is not new to the WASH sector; programmes have often included for example: cash for work; vouchers for water trucking, hygiene kits and fuel; setting up water kiosks etc. This document advocates

for WASH programmes that are more effective at delivering WASH outcomes through a better understanding of context including relevant information on market systems. And, for expanding our modalities of implementing possible response options.

## Coordination & Networking

Welthungerhilfe is a partner of the Global WASH Cluster (GWC) and a member of its Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). Welthungerhilfe is also an active participant in national WASH Clusters, which is highly recommended to country offices. Clusters are designated by the IASC and have clear responsibilities for sectoral coordination of humanitarian action. Information on the GWC – its role, function and resources can be found [here](#). Information on WASH activities during an on-going emergency response can be found on [Humanitarian Response Info](#). Another source of information exchange on relief operations is [Relief Web](#).

Welthungerhilfe is also a member of the [German WASH Network](#) who provide training on Emergency WASH to network members, produce humanitarian policy papers, for example, on Linking Relief, Recovery and Development (LRRD) and Cash Transfer Programming in Emergency WASH.

Welthungerhilfe also maintains a [WASH library](#) of resources on emergency WASH and a list of WASH experts that can support emergency operations. The Senior Advisor Basic Infrastructure, WASH in Bonn can be contacted for more information.

## Tools

- Shelter Centre, (2014). *Humanitarian Library*. [online] <https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/>
- WASH Cluster, (2017). *Resources Archive*. [online] <http://washcluster.net/training/training-resources>
- Wash Cluster, (n.d.). *GWC Coordination Tool Kit*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2CREw1l>

## Training & Learning

- CDC, (2016). *Emergency Planning, Training, & Response*. [online] <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/planning-training-response/planning-training.html>
- E4C, (n.d.). *WASH in Emergencies: Lessons Learned and Way Forward*. [online] <https://www.engineeringforchange.org/webinar/wash-in-emergencies-lessons-learned-and-way-forward/>
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- WEDC, (n.d.). *WHO Technical Notes for Emergencies*. [online] [https://wedc-knowledge.lboro.ac.uk/collections/tne/notes\\_emergencies.html](https://wedc-knowledge.lboro.ac.uk/collections/tne/notes_emergencies.html)

## References & Further Reading

ALNAP, (2017). *Resources*. [online] <https://www.alnap.org/resources>

London School of Health and Tropical Medicine, (2017). *WASH + Emergencies*. [online] <http://ehg.lshtm.ac.uk/wash-emergencies>

UNICEF, (2016). *WASH in emergencies*. [online] [https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942\\_4458.html](https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_4458.html)

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