

## WASH Approaches

### Scope and Application

#### Coordination

##### Cluster and national government coordination

When emergencies occur, good coordination is necessary. This is generally done through the cluster approach (when activated), whereby groups of humanitarian organisations (both UN and non-UN) in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action have clear responsibilities. IOM coordinates the implementation of WASH emergency activities with the national (or regional) WASH coordination platforms (i.e. WASH Cluster or WASH sector) with the exception of refugee response, where the activities are mostly coordinated with [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#). Depending on context and capacity, IOM WASH's role in coordination may involve diverse responsibilities such as supporting the national WASH coordination platform by being a WASH Cluster / sector focal point, leading a WASH Technical Working Group (TWiG), supporting with information management or acting as the WASH Cluster or sector coordination agency.

The WASH Cluster at national level is responsible for the development of the overall WASH strategy, coordinating sectoral needs assessments, developing a sector response plan, gathering project proposals and prioritizing them for the overall humanitarian response plans (HRP) or related national or regional humanitarian response planning tools, and leading the monitoring and evaluation process. Attendance and proactive participation of IOM WASH staff to meetings organized by the WASH Cluster is key in building up reputation and respect by the cluster, national government authorities, other partners and donors. It also allows IOM expertise to be shared with the WASH Cluster whilst allowing IOM to guide the strategic direction of the emergency management. Likewise, it is paramount that IOM WASH programmes at country level update the cluster's information management platform on a regular basis, consult the cluster with regard to geographical coverage of the program to ensure no duplication but synergy of activities, as well as develop technical proposals with consideration of WASH Cluster guidelines. IOM at a country level should position itself as a strong player contributing to the WASH strategy direction, coordinate activities in line with the agreed cluster strategy, whilst also contributing to and aligning operations to technical documentation as much as possible.

It is important to note that in emergencies the WASH Cluster (and/or other clusters) may not always be activated. When there is no cluster activation, IOM WASH coordinates with the sector lead or the lead coordinating agency who was implementing WASH activities prior to the emergency. This may have been the national government ministries (e.g. Ministry for Water and Sanitation), or other actors in the field where the government is unable or unwilling to provide this service to affected populations.

The responsibility for humanitarian response ultimately rests with the national government of the affected state. Effective emergency management occurs when the national government is leading the response, however the extent to which this is possible depends on the political or emergency context. Even when not leading, coordination with the host government is always required to ensure actions are aligned with national strategies (e.g. National Development Plans) and/or technical guidelines. For example, if WASH infrastructure resides within government-owned land, IOM WASH teams will have to closely coordinate with the government to ensure land tenure.

##### Other sectors

Mindful that the provision of WASH interventions is closely linked to other sectoral interventions - including [Education](#), [Camp Coordination and Camp Management \(CCCCM\)](#), [Food Security](#), [Health](#), [Logistics](#), [Nutrition](#), [Protection](#) and [Shelter](#) - the Global WASH Cluster has developed a checklist of roles and accountabilities between WASH and other clusters to reduce the risk of duplication and gaps in emergencies.

##### Governance

Good WASH governance is the effective management of water and sanitation services, from the protection of water sources, to the operation and maintenance (O&M) of infrastructure, to WASH revenue and human resource management and policymaking. Access to safe water and sanitation is a human right, therefore national governments are mandated to deliver WASH services to the population through national authorities.<sup>1</sup> However, in some settings the national government is unwilling or unable, or traditional

structures at village levels may manage their own water systems. IOM supports both national authorities, as well as water or WASH management committees to undertake their responsibilities to ensure the right to water and sanitation is achieved for all.

IOM WASH works towards governance structures that empower national governments and WASH committees to take an active role in responding to crises and managing their own WASH systems. This reduces the vulnerabilities of communities to emergencies by promoting resilience, whilst also ingraining sustainability of services into planning due to local ownership, with full authority in order to operate, manage and promote WASH facilities.

WASH governance is critical not only for delivering the human right to water and sanitation, but in the exercise of power and therefore inclusion in who has access to resources through policy and decision making. Good governance ensures decisions are inclusive and promote collective action, consensus building and effective implementation using a rights-based approach. Inclusive governance encourages more voices to be heard, allowing for more **appropriate** interventions and equitable distribution of services. Therefore in addition to contributing to [SDG6 \(clean water and sanitation\)](#) interventions simultaneously contribute to longer-term development outcomes such as [SDG5 \(Gender equality\)](#) and [SDG10 \(Reduced inequality\)](#).

IOM WASH works to strengthen WASH governance from the onset of emergency, enabling effective emergency responses, as well as aiming to build systems that are resilient to future crises. IOM WASH builds institutional capacity of WASH governance structures to prepare for emergencies through pre-defined clear roles and responsibilities, contextualized trainings and refresher trainings as required, capacity building (refer to Capacity Building section of WASH Operations: Key Considerations page) and supporting development of disaster management plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for emergencies. As outlined in the Coordination section this WASH Approaches page, IOM WASH should encourage national WASH authorities to take the lead where possible, and ensure that WASH interventions are in line with national legislation, policies and standards for WASH and public health.

## Innovation

---

As a driver of the WASH sector, innovation must be encouraged and nurtured, especially in areas of particular importance to IOM target populations, exploring how to do things more quickly or better in order to have the biggest possible impact in emergencies. Innovation for WASH in emergencies can pursue multiple avenues that are being developed at a rapid rate through academia, the private sector, start-up and technology companies, as well as innovations and pilots trailed through IOM WASH. These can include, but are not limited to, new water filtration technologies, water disinfection protocols, new menstrual hygiene management (MHM) products, new and more rapid WASH data collection methodologies, faecal sludge management (FSM), latrine design, water storage challenges, different ways to explore working with marginalized populations as well as through new programming, management and funding models.

The IOM Global WASH Support Team and country offices endeavour to pilot new technologies, partnerships and/or processes with the right support mechanisms in place, that can potentially be **scalable** to other areas. The IOM Global WASH Support Team works with country missions to develop, scale up, document and disseminate cutting edge WASH interventions for calls for proposals, and also partners with regional institutions to innovate at scale where appropriate. The IOM Global WASH Support Team keeps a database of WASH proposals submitted, as well as a database of innovative ideas that are conceptualized during business as usual work and from lessons learnt in the field or from various projects. This database can then be drawn upon to inspire innovative proposals when countries or the IOM Global WASH Support Team are applying for funding.

## Links

- [2015 IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module](#)

## Media



[Approaches to deliver IOM WASH in emergencies](#)

## Other Entries in this Topic

- [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\)](#)
- [WASH Programming](#)
- [Cross-Cutting Themes within WASH](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Key Considerations](#)

## Contacts

IOM's Global WASH Support Team is available to support country missions in a variety of ways as outlined in the IOM Global WASH Support Team mechanisms, including surge support, remote support and/or monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The Global WASH Support Team can be contacted for additional information or specific guidance at [washsupport@iom.int](mailto:washsupport@iom.int).

Document last updated: Oct 2022