

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Overview

Background

Providing access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) upholds the health, dignity, and overall wellbeing of communities. It is also a critical humanitarian service that saves lives during emergencies. IOM supports migrants and nearby host-communities - in particular those in situations of vulnerability - by addressing their WASH needs in emergency situations and supporting long-term preparedness and resilience. IOM WASH works in various settings including in camps and camp-like settings, within host communities, at points of entry (PoE) and in transit centres and institutions (such as schools and healthcare facilities (HCF)). IOM WASH responds to a range of emergencies such as man-made disasters (e.g., conflict, civil unrest, industrial accidents and famine) and natural hazards of slow and rapid onset (e.g., landslides, drought, floods, cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis), which can be compounded by additional factors such as disease outbreaks (e.g., cholera, Ebola, measles, dengue fever, COVID-19, HIV/AIDs), climate change, unplanned urbanization and under-development/poverty. In addition to operational assistance, IOM WASH supports governments in fulfilling their obligation to uphold the human right to water and sanitation through supporting governance structures and capacity building.

The provision of WASH services is usually one of the highest priorities following the onset of any emergency. With a continued focus on public health and related outcomes, the main objective of WASH in emergencies is to provide safe water and adequate sanitation and hygiene services. IOM emergency WASH operations strive for an immediate response with simultaneous investment in durable and scalable solutions, to lay solid foundations for post-emergency WASH programmes as well as for protracted crisis, while building from the outset community resilience to future shocks.

IOM WASH *responds* to emergencies ensuring all interventions are designed in accordance with humanitarian principles, upholding the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principles of the centrality of protection, and using SPHERE as general guidance for defining its sector-specific responses, while also taking the local context into consideration. IOM WASH recognizes that there are often underlying root causes of crisis, such as poverty, inequality and marginalization and/or corruption, causing vulnerable communities to be more severely impacted. Crises not only immediately impact people's lives, but impact on progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the long-term sustainability of IOM's work. IOM WASH therefore also supports individuals, communities and national governments to *mitigate* risks of emergencies (for example through disaster-resilient WASH infrastructure and disaster-aware community-based water management committees) and *prepare* for emergencies (for example through stockpiling of WASH equipment, development of disaster response plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and capacity building), to reduce vulnerabilities and increase community response capacity. Combined, these actions reduce overall negative impacts when emergencies occur.

Lastly, IOM WASH works with communities to recover from emergencies, to restore and improve the access to WASH services (for example through rehabilitation of water and sanitation community infrastructure, long-term improved hygiene behavior change and institutional and local capacity building), directly supporting progress towards SDG6 ("Ensure access to water and sanitation for all"), whilst also indirectly contributing to other SDGs.

WASH in IOM emergency operations

IOM WASH sits within the Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE), with the primary aim to embrace interventions led by the Preparedness and Response Division (PRD) and the Transition and Recovery Division (TRD), though contributes as well to the achievement of outcomes of other divisions within the organization, included but not limited to Migration Health Division (MHD), Immigration and Border Management (IBM) and Migration Environment and Climate Change (MEEC). IOM WASH emergency response therefore is closely linked to other sectoral interventions particularly with health and shelter responses calling for a multi-sectoral approach for all emergency interventions both within and external to IOM.

This Emergency Manual is in line with the [Global WASH Strategic Plan 2019-2022](#), which outlines IOM WASH strategic objectives; that is, for all program interventions to be:

Scalable: With WASH infrastructure and services that are planned to appropriately and efficiently address the needs of target populations during emergencies, while being designed with features that allow future upgrades to deliver a durable solution.

Immediate: With WASH response that is opportune to control the spread of water-related diseases and to preserve the health of target populations, with a focus on severely affected and hard-to-reach populations.

Sustainable: With WASH responses that, through the combination of the right approaches and technologies, empower and enable the target populations to take ownership and adapt to resolve current and future WASH needs.

Appropriate: With WASH responses that make use of technologies and approaches compatible with the needs, knowledge and circumstances of the affected population to fundamentally address critical health hazards.

These terms are bolded throughout these Emergency Manual pages, to show how the IOM WASH strategic objectives can be worked towards in emergency settings.

Overview of the WASH section of the Emergency Manual

This WASH section of the Emergency Manual is intended for internal use by WASH staff at all levels and as strategic guidance to missions' response decision makers, such as emergency coordinators and Chiefs of Mission. WASH activities should always be undertaken by professional WASH staff in order to deliver high-quality and comprehensive WASH programmes at scale during emergencies. WASH interventions are complex, requiring a high degree of technical expertise not provided in this manual, and should not be attempted without adequately trained and experienced WASH staff. Should missions require additional expertise or support, the IOM Global WASH Support Team is available to coordinate assistance through a range of mechanisms to increase capacities in countries facing emergencies. Support mechanisms include developing technical guidance, training curriculums and tailored programmatic and technical assistance. The IOM Global WASH Support Team assists country offices with surge capacity, through travels on duty, remote support, or through identification of suitable staff for deployments from its WASH expert's database. The IOM Global WASH Support Team coordinates the efforts to strengthen the institutional WASH knowledge management through the support of the IOM WASH Community of Practice (CoP), a mechanism that enables staff from different missions and varied WASH skills to discuss, share best practices and lessons learned and access WASH-related resource material.

This WASH section of the Emergency Manual outlines key technical WASH interventions that may be required in an emergency. Whilst IOM WASH also works in post-emergency contexts in its WASH programmes, the focus of this Emergency Manual is for emergency settings, where the objective is to deliver immediate, appropriate and life-saving WASH, whilst aiming to be as scalable and sustainable as possible for the consideration of long-term development outcomes. It is not the intent of this Emergency Manual to provide detailed technical guidance or checklists. It outlines the approaches to be used for each aspect of WASH and provides references for detailed technical guidelines that can be adapted for different settings. These are linked in the page of each technical section and can be accessed via the IOM WASH CoP and/or via links online.

This WASH section of the Emergency Manual also outlines approaches and cross-cutting themes. The [WASH Approaches](#) and [Cross-cutting Themes in WASH](#) *should be applied to every aspect of WASH response from the onset of an emergency through to the IOM exit strategy, and therefore are not specifically referenced in each technical operation section of the manual. Instead, they are included in the "Links" section of each page for easy reference.*

The integration of approaches, programming, technical operations and cross-cutting themes in WASH is complex, particularly in emergencies when there are multiple priorities and actors. The video on [Approaches to deliver IOM WASH in emergencies](#) aims to show how the various IOM dimensions work together.

References and Tools

- [IOM WASH Highlights 2022](#)

Other Entries in this Topic

- [WASH Approaches](#)
- [WASH Programming](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Key Considerations](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Water Supply and Treatment](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Sanitation](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Hygiene Promotion](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Drainage, Vector Control, Management of WASH NFIs](#)
- [Cross-Cutting Themes within WASH](#)

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