



Global Water, Sanitation and
Hygiene Cluster



UNICEF is the WASH Cluster lead agency that is responsible for engaging partners in setting WASH standards and policies (while also developing these where gaps remain), consolidating and disseminating these standards, and identifying best practices for areas requiring technical expertise.²⁴

GENDER EQUALITY IN WASH

Meeting basic sanitation needs specific to women, girls, boys, and men prevents disease, increases equitable access to adequate and appropriate WASH facilities, and plays an important role in the protection and dignity of people and communities affected by a humanitarian emergency. Water, sanitation and hygiene is linked to many human rights and has cascading impacts for other sectoral interventions. It is a key determinant of health and nutrition, it is linked to menstrual hygiene management (and therefore girls' education and opportunities), and it can contribute to reducing SGBV and the burden of unpaid work on women and girls.

PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WASH CLUSTER

- Gender, age, and disability-sensitive participatory approaches at all stages of a project can help ensure adapted and appropriate WASH services/facilities;
- Contextualized dignity kits can include hijabs, pamphlets, culturally appropriate sanitary items, sanitary pads, along with cloth "privacy screens" for dignified outdoor drying;
- Ensuring latrines are clearly labelled as female/male/family/wheelchair accessible, have a separate entrance, have hooks, shelves, mirrors, lights, ramps, grab rails, etc. to properly meet impacted groups' needs;
- Prevent women and girls from limiting their own food and water intake (in order to reduce their use of latrines) by involving them in latrine planning to determine solutions for long wait times, cleaning, and maintenance; and
- Consultations on WASH services should include diverse members of affected communities to best design these services. For example, engineers, who are often men, can be sensitized to avoid heteronormative and binary perspectives and ensure a better integration of gendered considerations and LGBTQIA2S+ health and safety concerns. Similarly, disability inclusion promotes dignified access to WASH services.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

- Organize community volunteers to identify risks and solutions. For example, nightly group visits to latrines to reduce risk to safety;
- Include men and boys as WASH champions alongside women and girls to promote gender equality, social cohesion, and to address fears of male disempowerment;
- Conduct gender power analyses to find gaps and opportunities to promote women's and girls' active participation in governance structures. It is also important to engage men and boys in understanding gender-based inequalities and to promote allyship;
- Water, sanitation and hygiene should be designed as a sustainable service, rather than a one-time installation, or water trucking; this requires consistent participation or consultation in design and monitoring;
- Humanitarian organizations should budget for ongoing consultations and adjustments to programming. For example, considering that locks on a latrines can break, requiring ongoing maintenance, and when there is a demographic change, the new design should include vulnerable groups' perspectives, etc. It is encouraged that donors consider these ongoing adjustments as legitimate expenses;
- Examine environmentally sustainable and sanitary options for WASH interventions that do not increase pollution or result in other harmful health impacts on affected communities;
- Engage women on WASH committees without overburdening them: support child care collectives, communal contributions to family meals, men taking on additional responsibilities or other burden-sharing initiatives in order to allow women to participate effectively; and
- Understand that despite the burden women face by collectively travelling to obtain water (and to do river laundry), this often provides an important opportunity for women to gather, socialize, and support one another away from men. Once local water points are installed, support women to use travel time saved to engage in other social, communal, or learning events for women by creating an alternative space to gather (as they choose), rather than women using this time to return to isolated time at home completing additional chores.

24. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/water-sanitation-hygiene>