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Guidance on Roles and Key Actions to Ensure Continuity and Affordability of Essential WASH Goods and Services During and After the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. Introduction

When a global pandemic such as COVID-19 strikes, it has a major disruptive effect on both businesses and public services with major implications for jobs and livelihoods and hence household incomes. The scale and extent of measures taken to respond to COVID-19 are unparalleled in history – and the lockdowns have had far-ranging consequences on economies and societies, reflected in worsening unemployment statistics, falls in global stock prices and forecasts of widespread economic recession. Due to the direct and indirect health impacts of the disease, mobility restrictions and adjustments in supply chains, many services that are considered essential to the population to weather the crisis need special attention to avoid disruption and breakdown. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are among this list of essential services.

The response to avoid or reduce the disruption of WASH services and supply chains is necessarily a multi-pronged one, involving many stakeholders and market players. As the continuity and affordability of WASH is threatened, responses need to be evidence-based, timely and coordinated. In addition, the response needs to be focused on poor and vulnerable populations, given the greater impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these groups, and the lower service levels and resilience of their current access to WASH.

UNICEF recognizes itself as one of many players who are essential to the COVID-19 response, including the measures to reduce or avoid disruption of a range of public services and markets in essential goods. UNICEF is implementing a multi-sectoral response to not only reduce the spread of COVID-19 but also it is formulating and implementing a range of measures to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of response measures, and map and monitor the WASH impacts and responses through its global systems (Situation Reports and periodic surveys by Division of Data, Analytics, Policy and Monitoring). Furthermore, it will be necessary to monitor other non-WASH indicators such as unemployment rates and household income impacts, as this will affect the demand and ability to pay for WASH services.

In defining WASH's contribution to the overall strategy, the following three complementary programme areas have been defined in UNICEF's COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response WASH Strategic Programming Framework (2020):

1. Hand hygiene and Hygiene Promotion
2. Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)
3. Continuity and affordability of essential WASH services and products

This document focuses on the third of these, though there exist many overlaps with the first two. To implement these three programme areas, a number of common activities are needed around policies, monitoring, financing and knowledge management, among others, which will require coordination.

The objective of Area 3 is as follows:

“In responding to the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, UNICEF (with or through partners) will ensure that all children and their families have access to safe, sustainable and affordable water and sanitation services, hand hygiene facilities and hygiene supplies, including menstrual supplies for girls and women in all settings. For Building Forward Better, UNICEF will seek opportunities to ensure water and energy efficiency (reduce Operations & Maintenance costs (O&M) costs), to identify and implement new technologies for supply, and to build capacity of governments, utilities and communities on climate resilience of services.”

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of roles and actions required at different levels to ensure continuity and affordability of essential WASH goods and services during and after the global COVID-19 pandemic, covering the various entities including UNICEF, and be a source of reference for more detailed resource materials.

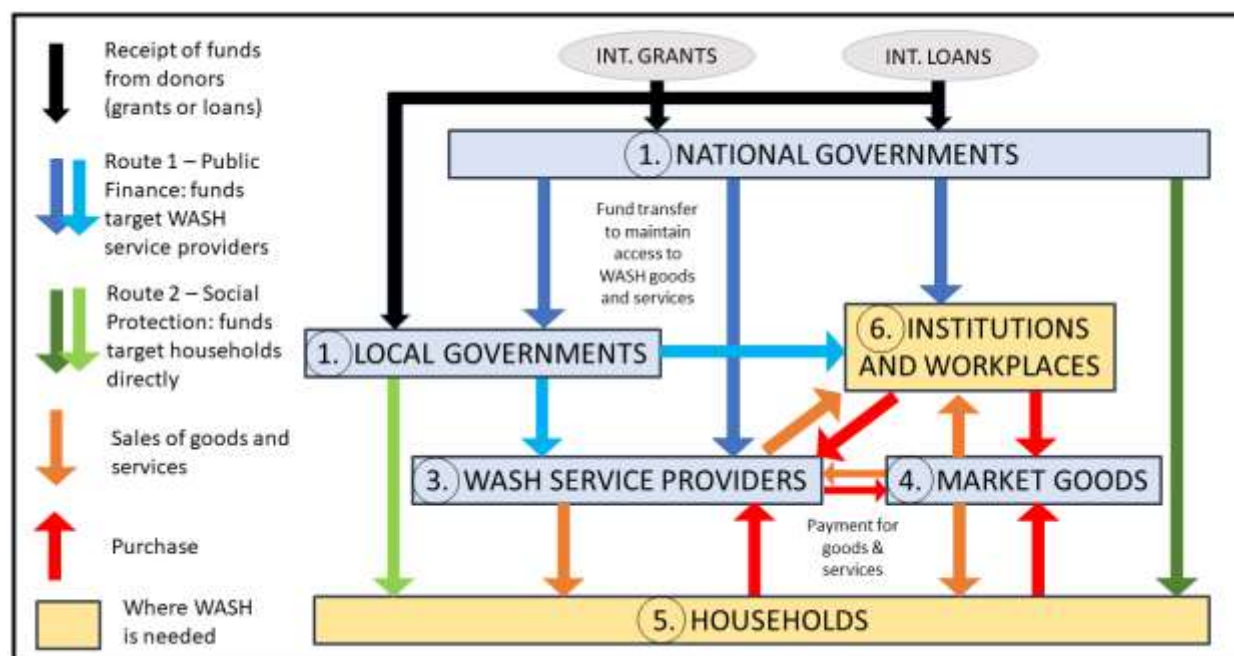
Different entities have been identified as being relevant for ensuring the continuity and affordability of WASH services and products. These are providers of goods and services or those responsible for them, including international organizations, national governments, local governments, WASH service regulators and authorities, WASH service providers, supply chains for WASH consumables and products, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). This document covers these stakeholders in the following four sections. Note that the support of UNICEF and other international or local organizations is covered under each.

1. **National and local governments** are responsible for coordination, policies, plans and budgets, financial support, advocacy, monitoring and review, and capacity development. National and local are grouped together, as they fulfil somewhat similar roles, but at different levels. Political leadership is identified as key for the fund flow and public messaging for continuity and affordability of WASH services.
2. **WASH service regulators and authorities** are responsible for ensuring WASH services for populations (both households and institutions).
3. **Water, sanitation and hygiene service providers**, including consumables needed for service operation such as fuel and chemicals for water treatment.
4. Actors along the **supply chain** for household and institutional users, covering different market goods.

The final two categories are beneficiaries of services. It is important to assess how the above four link effectively with these beneficiaries. Note that not all water/WASH users are explicitly included here, such as commercial users, though the level of disruption and measures to address will be similar to those of the two beneficiary groups that this paper focuses on:

5. **Users at the household level.**
6. **Users at the institutional level**, including schools, health facilities, workplaces, detention centres, and public places, among others.

Figure 1. Main stakeholders and entities for assuring the continuity and affordability of essential WASH goods and services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic



2. Role of Stakeholders in ensuring Service

2.1 Governments

OBJECTIVE: National WASH sector systems and enabling environment are strengthened and supported to ensure continuity, expansion and affordability of WASH services during the COVID-19 response and post-crisis recovery, with a focus on building resilience to future pandemics and other threats, including climate change and water scarcity.

Given the higher number of cases and deaths in urban areas, guidelines specific to urban areas have been elaborated, with a focus on slums and informal settlements: Interim Technical Note on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for COVID-19 Response in Slums and Informal Urban Settlements ([Link](#)).

While the figures are not as high as urban areas, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact for indigenous peoples so far. In line with the Guidance Note for the UN System prepared by the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous issues, WASH is identified as an entry point to ensure indigenous peoples' rights and well-being. In this context, working with indigenous governance and government institutions serving indigenous peoples is important to ensure no one is left behind.

Note that the numbers in brackets over the following pages are cross-references to the Response mapping exercise conducted by SIWI with UNICEF, to draw linkages with this exercise: Overview of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) COVID-19 Responses from Governments, Regulators, Utilities and other Stakeholders in 84 Countries ([Link](#)); in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Countries ([Link](#)); and in Latin America and in the Caribbean ([Link](#)).

Coordination

Coordination is an overarching principle for all actions and at all levels, covering both the enabling environment and support to WASH services delivery. UNICEF needs to make sustained investment in supporting collaboration platforms and joint ways of working.

Government roles:

- Provide sector leadership and coordination
- Establish/expand multi-actor emergency coordination mechanisms including international and multilateral organizations and other actors (6.1)
- Ensure COVID-19 response strengthens existing mechanisms and do not operate in parallel
- Assign roles to development partners and demand transparency in their actions
- Provide a platform for knowledge sharing
- Establish a coordination platform/channel with utilities/operators and their associations for the exchange of information (5.11)
- Ensure multi-sector coordination mechanisms continue beyond the emergency (6.2)
- Involve community leaders and representatives in coordination forum to ensure transparent and accountable plans and response

UNICEF roles:

- Lead or co-lead the development partner group or Cluster Platform ([Link](#)), as per assigned role
- Support government leadership including organization of meetings
- Be a champion among development partners on adopting a coordinated and united WASH sector plan, and a single monitoring platform
- Advocate for and support the humanitarian-development nexus approach, i.e. strengthening systems while ensuring continuity of WASH services
- Advocate for 'reimagining the future' UNICEF Collaboration Site on the Reimagine Campaign and 'building back better'. The East Asia and Pacific region has defined its own regional vision ([Link](#))
- Support platform for knowledge sharing, using own systems where needed
- Inclusion in UNICEF webinars, where appropriate Global Webinar Platform

Guidance and documents

- Global WASH Cluster – COVID-19 Response Guidance Note (01 April 2020) ([Link](#))

Learning and knowledge priorities (examples)

- How to effectively use and strengthen existing coordination platform(s) for the COVID-19 response?
- How to effectively share COVID-19 knowledge and coordinate with government and all development partners without face-to-face meetings?

BOX 1.

CASE STUDY/EXAMPLE FROM LAC:

In LAC, UNICEF and PAHO co-lead the Regional WASH LAC Coordination platform. With COVID 19, knowledge management has been a key priority. The group is composed of various WASH actors in LAC ([Link](#)) including government, civil society, donors, UN and INGOs, regional associations (i.e. CWWA, CEPREDENAC, CAWASA, CARPHA, etc) the private sector and other actors.

More than 15 webinars ([Link](#)) were organized in the first 6 months of the COVID-19 response in LAC covering COVID 19 WASH related topics that were demand based and of interest to the nearly 1,000 members of the group. Presentations at the webinars were delivered by various actors including WASH government officials from various countries, for example Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago. To foster knowledge and priorities in the sector, the WASH LAC Group also coordinated with SWA to provide webinars that cover the same topics (i.e. water utilities and operators) adapted to the respective groups' audiences.

Additionally, in collaboration with the GWC, the group offered the WASH Operational Coordination training ([Link](#)) in Spanish and English with over 250 trainees signing up to support sector level coordination and is preparing to deliver the Market based Programming in WASH in Emergencies training in October 2020.

Policies, plans and budgets

Policies should be formulated to ensure extension of WASH services to the most marginalized populations, especially those living in slums and informal urban settlements.

Government roles:

- Update existing and/or initiate new policies related to COVID-19 across multiple sectors, with a focus on poor and vulnerable groups
 - Forbid disconnection of the water supply to households who are unable to pay bills, under any circumstances (3.2)
 - Waive payment of reconnection fee to all households disconnected for non-payment that do not currently receive water services (3.3)
 - Set a minimum daily volume of drinking water for all households classified as vulnerable or not connected to the mains network (3.4)
 - Set standards for hand hygiene facilities in public spaces and institutions, support the implementation of standards and monitor compliance
 - Make provisions for WASH services to all segments of the population living outside a home (3.5)
 - Ensure availability of public waterpoints while guaranteeing that public or community bathrooms are open, equipped with hand hygiene supplies, available and accessible at an affordable price to people who do not have them at home and/or are doing essential work outside (3.13)

- Integrate gender sensitive approaches in access, use and control of WASH services, focusing on specific needs and interests of men and women, including MHM measures (1.5)
- Ensuring that there are specific measures aimed at addressing the needs, interests and socially defined roles of women and girls in relation to water, sanitation and hygiene (3.6)
- Provide non-centralized basic sanitation solutions through unconventional technologies when needed, to all households not connected to the sewerage system, in order to prevent worsening the prevalence of open defecation (3.10)
- Policies and practices need to ensure that water scarcity is not exacerbated by the increased demand but that there are water efficiency measures in place to counteract, and that there is groundwater monitoring.
- Lead the planning process including financial planning for programming of additional or reprogrammed funds to COVID-19
- Identify those areas most at risk from COVID-19 (“hotspots”) and categorise as ‘priority intervention areas’ (3.1)
- Develop a costed multisectoral roadmap and plan to promote hygiene, particularly hand hygiene, across different settings in response to COVID-19 and in the medium- and long-term
- Guarantee access to electricity and communications for users so they can communicate with service providers and authorities, receive information and make online payments (3.11)
- Secure access to energy / electricity for utilities, to ensure the operation of water, sanitation and hygiene services (4.9)

UNICEF roles:

- Conduct or support mapping of policy and other responses to ensure continuity, expansion and affordability of WASH, and collating and generating evidence where there are gaps
- Help identify and promote public policy measures that should be adopted in the WASH sector to ensure the continuity of water, sanitation and hygiene services in a period of confinement
- Lobby or work with government to find arrangements with electric utilities not to disconnect water operators¹
- Support governments to prepare implementation plans, budgets and funding needs for priority response and recovery measures to ensure that systems are built back better
- Where a WASH BAT was previously conducted, draw on results of the exercise to identify and resolve key bottlenecks related to the COVID-19 response
- Where a WASH BAT was not previously conducted, draw on the analytical framework – including building blocks – that enables a comprehensive overview of bottlenecks that are preventing the continuity and affordability of WASH services to the poor and vulnerable
- For Building Back Better, support inclusion of climate resilience in the policies and plans, making them more water and energy efficient

UNICEF and the UNCT should advocate for one single national WASH response plan and refrain from having multiple WASH plans, this includes joint sectoral plans and donor support to unified plans and

¹ One issue is that many water committees have electricity bills registered as individuals so without the quick mapping of all contact details of water operators the electric companies will not know who is a water committee and who is an individual.

funding. In contexts with multiple crisis and humanitarian situations, the same applies to ensure plans are affected population focused rather than siloed plans for each crisis and situation (i.e. conflict, Covid-19, migration). Guidance and documents

- WASH Sector Response to Covid-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean ([Link](#))
- Compiled country office plan and response updates

Learning and knowledge priorities (examples)

- What should UNICEF / government do in contexts with low baseline WASH services?
- What starting conditions helped countries to be well prepared for an outbreak?

Funding and Financing

There are two main mechanisms for channeling financial assistance to ensure continuity and affordability of WASH:

- Market support - uses Public Finance to support service providers continue to deliver services in times of reduced revenue. This includes funds channeled from International Financial Institutions – IFIs. Market support can also involve grant or loan provision or easing of loan repayment conditions (through restructuring outstanding loans) to WASH businesses facing cash flow challenges.
- Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) is a social protection measure to directly assist households to afford WASH services and products. Funds are typically provided by national or local governments and can be supplemented with funds from IFIs.

Government roles:

- Review of water tariffs, tax incentives and affordability, and estimation of subsidy amounts needed for service providers (including for cash transfer schemes, assess WASH costs as part of Minimum Expenditure Basket)
- Reprogramme existing budgets to have the greatest impact on vulnerable populations
- Collaborate with Ministry of Finance and IFIs to ensure inclusion of provisions for water, sanitation and hygiene in economic response mechanisms
- Identify and utilize mechanisms to distribute funds to households and communities
- Establish, maintain or extend (in collaboration with social protection services) the financial instruments² needed to facilitate service payments, particularly for vulnerable households (3.7)
- Ensure a free minimum basic consumption for families anticipating an increase in consumption due to better hygiene and the confinement of many people in their homes (3.9)
- Ensure the availability and affordability of quality products for family hygiene, menstrual hygiene and domestic water treatment, either through direct distribution, cash-based interventions or market control mechanisms (e.g., by controlling prices fluctuations for WASH commodities) (1.4)
- Awareness raising to foster willingness to pay for water, sanitation and hygiene and ensure those who are able to pay will continue paying for the service (3.8)
- Ensure additional funding for service providers for the extra costs and lower income while coping with the emergency (4.11)

² Such as Direct Cash Transfers, subsidy systems, social bonus, freezing bill collection, writing off debts for non-payment, waiving households from reconnection fees, or postponement of tariff adjustments

- Ensure urban utilities receive the necessary financial support and supplies (including personal protective equipment) to guarantee the proper operation of services (5.8)
- Ensure rural and community operators (both formal and informal) receive the necessary financial support and supplies (including personal protective equipment) and technical assistance to ensure continuity of service (5.9)
- Ensure dialogue with government and financial institutions to negotiate the debts of utilities (5.5)
- Activate special funds to guarantee the operation of services, and to improve, upgrade and expand water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure to meet the specific needs caused by the pandemic (5.7)
- Development of innovative financial mechanisms to facilitate operators' access to funds in relation to the crisis (5.10)

UNICEF roles:

- Influence and plan for grants and loans allocated towards WASH, and selecting equitable, efficient and sustainable ways for IFI funds to be spent. Guidance on Leveraging IFI and EU
- Funding and Financing Opportunities for WASH-related COVID-19 Responses
- Explore the optimal ways of utilizing public funds to ensure continuity and affordability of WASH goods and services. Reflect how programmes work with Social Policy in order to strengthen social safety nets. This collaboration is critical in order to also understand what are the social policy changes that are happening in each sector and if they bring the expected results.
- Promote post-distribution monitoring of the use of multi-purpose cash transfers for example to identify how much of it is spent on WASH so that the WASH Sectors map, adapt and complement the programs and response

Guidance and documents

- Financial Support Measures that Strengthen WASH Continuity and Affordability in the Time of COVID-19. 2020. UNICEF ([Link](#))
- Guidance on Market-Based Programming for Humanitarian WASH Practitioners. Global WASH Cluster. 2019 ([Link](#))
- Cash and Markets in the WASH Sector. A Global WASH Cluster Position Paper. December 2016 ([Link](#))
- Global Social Protection Programme Framework. 2020. UNICEF ([Link](#))
- Programme Guidance on Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems. UNICEF ([Link](#))
- Humanitarian Cash Transfers Programmatic Guide. UNICEF ([Link](#))
- Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. European Union ([Link](#))
- Considerations for Financial Facilities to Support Water Utilities in the COVID-19 Crisis ([Link](#)). Building on the experiences of previous financial crises, the objective of this document is to lay out the options and considerations in the design of facilities to provide emergency financial support to water utilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNICEF Humanitarian Cash Transfers and Covid-19 Recommendations - UNICEF Humanitarian Cash Transfers and Covid ([Link](#))

Learning and knowledge priorities (examples)

- What are the most effective short- and medium-term financial transfer or payment mechanisms to ensure suppliers can still operate WASH services?
- What is the sustainability of financial transfers from national or local governments to water operators?
- What are short-, medium- and long-term financial implications for water and sanitation utilities and other service providers to continue service provision during and after the pandemic?
- What is household prioritization of WASH services in the face of income losses? (demand-side)
- What demand is there / would there be for WASH services under cash transfer schemes?
- What are short-term financial transfer or payment mechanisms to ensure households / communities still have access to WASH services?

Advocacy

In alignment with UNICEF COVID- 19 Advocacy Framework, the advocacy key message is to ensure continuity of WASH services for everyone in all settings. Advocacy cuts across all intervention levels, hence arises under each section. The below list of roles reflects the fact that the government is the instigator as well as the target of advocacy.

Government roles:

- Advocate to the Ministry or Prime Minister's Office leading the COVID-19 response for WASH service continuity and expansion to be prioritised
- Advocate to the Ministry of Finance and other ministries responsible for budgets and local government affairs for budgets integrated in annual planning cycle.
- Advocate to line ministries such as education and health, but also non-traditional partners such as labour or transportation, to ensure WASH is given the attention and resources that are needed in the COVID-19 response (refer to UNICEF's programming areas 1 and 2 on hand hygiene and IPC, respectively) and for the continuity of WASH services during the pandemic and beyond.
- Advocate for reliable regional and national WASH supply chains, while sustaining, strengthening and diversifying the supply chains of all products and materials needed to operate water, sanitation and hygiene services, ranging from rural small-scale systems to urban, large-scale systems (4.4)

UNICEF roles:

- Target the Ministries responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene with advocacy messages around financing, monitoring, equity, sustainability and so on
- Support the Ministries responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene with evidence-based advocacy to Ministry of Finance and other line ministries
- Advocate for responses to integrate WASH services for people with disabilities/special needs
- Work with donors to maintain UNICEF funding commitment for WASH services and financial support to water and sanitation utilities and hygiene service providers for continuity of services
- Advocate for monitoring of availability and price increases for WASH commodities (e.g. soap, chlorine-based products) and identify in advance potential stock-outs
- Advocate for price controls on essential WASH goods and products and WASH service tariffs, where these are necessary to keep WASH services affordable to specific population groups

- Advocate for mechanisms and systems to be put in place to ensure WASH services are extended to everyone, including the most vulnerable populations.
- Advocate for mechanisms that engage communities and vulnerable groups to voice and advocate for their needs and rights
- Advocate for the protection of WASH workers as essential personnel during COVID-19 response
- Advocate for support to local service providers and producers of soap/hygiene products
- Advocate for reduced VAT or import taxes on WASH services, goods and products
- Advocate for the integration of climate and water scarcity risks, as well as renewable energy; water/energy efficiency opportunities into the response
- On-going advocacy done for basic WASH services coverage for crisis affected population through cluster/ sector (i.e. refugees, IDPs, migrants and children on the move)
- Advocate for debt rescheduling, relief or cancellation and inclusion of water and sanitation services providers in economic response packages.
- Advocate for increasing connection rates for low connection rate sewer systems, to receive government subsidies to support connections for low-income households.
- In making further policies or investments, ensure that climate resilient considerations are incorporated

Guidance and documents

- Advocacy Messages for Child Protection Actors: Prioritizing Child Protection in COVID-19 Response Plans ([Link](#))
- Hand Hygiene for All - A call to action for all of society to achieve universal access to hand hygiene ([Link](#))

Monitoring and review

Periodically monitor and map the disruption of WASH services, populations affected, prices and financial sustainability, and analyze trends, estimate gaps and propose corrective actions where needed. This includes, where possible, disaggregation of data to enable fine-tuned response (rural/urban; socio-economic level; sex-disaggregated).

Government roles:

- Overlay WASH coverage levels on COVID-19 mapping exercises and identification of priority districts / areas
- Conduct socio-economic studies where needed (3.1)
- Include WASH indicators in the information systems of education and health sectors
- Conduct formative research and establish baseline data on hand hygiene in health care facilities, schools and other settings, and fill gaps as identified
- Conduct rapid assessments of the WASH situation in public toilets and public waterpoints (kiosks), to guarantee that public facilities are properly operated and maintained (3.13)
- Create and update a baseline of informal operators (national telephone directory) to be shared between local governments and national government and civil society entities to facilitate needs assessment and technical assistance when needed (4.2)
- Conducting regular monitoring of WASH supplies and services access and prices, and take corrective measures when needed (4.3)

- Promoting correct monitoring of utilities and middle to small-scale operators by the government. Developing a simple monitoring system to facilitate early detection of service delivery failures and promote corrective actions (5.1)
- Support tracking information in order to evaluate the economic impacts of the crisis for the sector and design of recommendations (solutions) (5.2)
- Periodically monitor the national WASH response plan.

UNICEF roles:

- Complete the UNICEF global socio-economic impact questionnaire (quarterly)
- Submit quarterly data via standard RAM indicators
- Review any country specific third-party assessment (e.g. SIWI work)
- Work with OCHA to adjust the online 345W for the WASH sector with activities and indicators aligned with both the national response plans and the HAC indicators.
- Work with the National Cash Working Groups from the WASH Sector and Cluster to support with integrating market and cash-based programming in WASH, for example, supporting costing of minimum expenditure baskets (MEBs), conducting post-distribution monitoring of cash programs, designing and implementing market assessments
- Support the regulatory agency to map the continuity of WASH services, prices and financial sustainability, analyze trends, estimate gaps and propose corrective actions when needed.
- Partner with academic institutions and think tanks to capture lessons learnt and generate evidence for the WASH sector in the COVID-19 context.
- Seek opportunities for inclusion of climate resilience in monitoring of water and sanitation services in the COVID-19 response

Guidance and documents

- SitRep indicators (twice monthly) – number of people reached with IPC training, WASH supplies and IPC messages
- DAPM (quarterly): evolving indicators, focusing on service disruptions, reason for disruption, and disruption in financing and the government response
- GWC (monthly): monitoring socio-economic impact in HRP countries – focusing on prices changes and service or market disruptions (e.g. soap, water, bleach).
- Response monitoring – includes over 50 indicators or variables on a sample of 84 countries ([Link](#)) with greater country coverage in [LAC](#) and [MENA](#) regions. Ongoing monitoring and additional indicators are expected in LAC and MENA and possibly other regions.
 - UNICEF, SIWI. Overview of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) COVID-19 Responses from Governments, Regulators, Utilities and other Stakeholders in 84 Countries. 2010 Aug. ([Link](#))
 - UNICEF, SIWI. COVID-19 WASH Responses by Governments, Water Utilities and Stakeholders in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Countries. 2020. ([Link](#))
 - UNICEF, SIWI. The WASH sector and its response to Covid-19: initiatives in Latin America and in the Caribbean. Annex 3b: Measures adopted in Caribbean countries in response to the pandemic. Updated until: June 17, 2020. Jul 2020. ([Link](#))
- GWC Multipurpose Cash in WASH Core Indicators List ([Link](#))
- Regional WASH LAC Coordination Platform produced weekly COVID 19 bulletins ([Link](#)) for the WASH sector. A website was established that includes all resources developed by the group: www.washlac.com

Learning and knowledge priorities (examples)

- What are response options to cost-effectively and equitably control a future pandemic, and what are the variable factors (according to nature of the threat) and pre-conditions of success?
- How does UNICEF do effective hygiene promotion in the context of limited mobility and human-to-human contact?
- What is the sustainability of our WASH response? And how to make it more sustained?
- How accountable is the WASH response? And how can we improve accountability mechanisms to allow for increased dialogue between community and decision makers?
- What are impacts of COVID and the response on other diseases – going up or down?
- How to better monitor hygiene?

Capacity Development

Capacity gaps in the above building blocks will make the COVID-19 response less effective, hence this section covers some of the likely gaps.

Government roles:

- Establish communication channels between utilities and users, such as dedicated webpages for COVID-19, hotlines, real-time information collection and advice (queries or concerns consumers may have about bills or service) (3.12)
- Provide technical assistance to utilities for the implementation of appropriate strategies and service delivery models that secure provision of services for all (5.3)
- Provide technical assistance to utilities for management, financing, planning, operation and maintenance, and supporting the creation/updating and implementation of emergency response plans or contingency plans (5.4)
- Provide technical support to local suppliers and manufacturers, including through coordination and facilitation, to rapidly produce and distribute the needed hand hygiene facilities and supplies, as well as promotional materials
- Map existing capacities and identify capacity gaps and opportunities for capacity development

UNICEF roles:

- Provide training on how to shift from individual organization's WASH response plan to a single and united WASH sector plan, and a single monitoring platform.
- Support a mapping of sector actors' capacity and thus identify capacity gaps to develop national development plan with emphasis on labor intensive jobs creation, building back better and 'green' recovery
- Promote appropriate reforms to strengthen the capacities of utilities and position them to attract additional financing for improved service delivery
- Support peer to peer learning, virtual technical exchange and capacity support among water and sanitation utilities and hygiene service providers as part of the efforts of minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on WASH services and ensuring continuity of services
- Strengthen systems for documentation of experiences and systematic dissemination of WASH response for effective planning of future interventions based on lessons learnt

2.2 WASH service regulators and local authorities

OBJECTIVE: Regulators and local authorities are capacitated to play their role to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene services continue to be provided at affordable prices, with special attention on most at risk and vulnerable populations. Also, that attention is given to those populations without basic WASH services prior to the crisis, as they will be the most vulnerable.

Regulator/authority roles:

- Temporary revision of regulatory requirements according to the situation (5.6)
- Create and update a baseline of informal operators (national telephone directory) to be shared between local governments and national government and civil society entities to facilitate needs assessment and technical assistance when needed (4.2)
- Create or update contact databases, focusing on informal WASH operators, rural community leaders and slums leaders to ensure their engagement in coordination and support for service delivery
- Conduct regular monitoring of WASH supplies and services access and prices, and take corrective measures when needed (4.3)
- Support service providers develop plans
- Collect rapid information on risk indicators and service disruption for both formal and informal service providers.
- Oversee expansion of urban WASH services in vulnerable underserved populations and areas.
- Assess and mitigate the increased associated risk of using communal facilities in the COVID context.
- Strengthen capacity and preparedness to new/recurring disasters (i.e. hurricane) to ensure continued services in case of multiple emergencies, and that these risks have been incorporated into the design of new systems, or risk assessments carried out on existing systems.
- Conducting rapid assessments of the WASH situation in health care facilities, securing the continuity and quality of water, sanitation and hygiene services (24*7) and safely managing health care waste (including PPE). Adopt alternative and decentralized mechanisms, if needed (4.15)
- Securing the continuity and quality of water, sanitation and hygiene services in isolation centers and in social care institutions and centers for women victim of violence, including engaging in frequent hand hygiene using appropriate techniques and implementing regular cleaning and disinfection practices and safely managing waste (including PPE) (4.16)
- Ensuring the availability, quality and continuity of water, sanitation and hand hygiene services in schools (including early childhood centers), using unconventional mechanisms if necessary, in preparation of schools' reopening. Ensuring safe schools & early childhood centers, operations and adapt school & early childhood center policies to used WASH facilities (4.17)

UNICEF roles:

- Work with local water, sanitation and hygiene authorities and utilities to ensure continuity and affordability of water, sanitation and hygiene services to avoid deterioration or collapse of essential public services during the COVID-19 crisis
- Ensure access is sustained to affordable WASH products and services for the poorest and most vulnerable population groups (e.g. refugee/IDP camps, urban slums)

- Support regulatory agency or water operators' associations (if too sensitive between informal operators and the regulatory agency) to generate contact details of all informal WASH operators for coordination and support
- Support city government, municipalities and regulators to develop and implement business continuity plans
- Bring special attention on small and informal service providers that are at risk of service disruption (breakdown, lack of mobility)
- Propose and implement measures for support to the poorest and marginalized communities/ populations
- Support accountability mechanisms for service delivery, including through technology and with consideration to age and gender of users. Support specialized and recognized institutions working in informal settlements to strengthen their operations on data and evidence generation that could be used for sustained advocacy, planning and provision of WASH services as part of the overall masterplan for city development.

Ensure that unsupervised response interventions, such as water trucks which attract crowds, do not exacerbate the situation and are incentivized to provide quality of services

- Interim technical note on water, sanitation and hygiene for COVID-19 response in slums and informal urban settlements. UNICEF and UN-HABITAT ([Link](#))

2.3 WASH service providers

OBJECTIVE: Service Providers are supported to continue to provide water, sanitation and hygiene services, with special attention on most at risk and vulnerable populations.

WASH service provider roles:

- Identifying critical intervention areas ("hotspots") in the utility's service area to prioritize COVID-19 response interventions (4.1)
- Expand infrastructure and extending coverage of water, sanitation and hygiene services to unserved areas (4.5)
- Ensure proper operation of drinking water systems at all stages (protection from source to consume), proper disinfection of water supply scheme to offices (networks not in use during lockdown) and accelerate measures on water conservation and efficiency gains - e.g. leakage reduction to counteract the increased water demand (4.6)
- Ensure proper operation of the sewerage system and non-centralized sanitation solutions at every point of the sanitation chain: emptying of latrines and septic tanks and transport, treatment and final disposal of fecal sludge (4.7)
- Ensure safe decommissioning of WASH services in temporary facilities (4.7)
- Adapt M&E plans to control COVID-19 presence in water and wastewater, including a proper analysis of treated effluent in wastewater treatment plants - before its discharge to water bodies, and in all critical points of the sanitation chain (4.8)
- Secure access to energy / electricity for utilities, to ensure the operation of water, sanitation and hygiene services (4.9)
- Development of new online services waiting for back to normality / development of new relationship with costumers waiting for the reopening of offices and agencies (4.10)

- Ensuring proper waste management at all stages - special attention is needed to processing used masks and other PPE (4.12)
- Ensuring availability and access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for service providers' staff with risk of exposure to virus (4.13)
- Ensuring availability and access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for informal water, hygiene and sanitation workers with risk of exposure to virus (4.14)

UNICEF roles:

- Support water and sanitation utilities and other service providers, including hygiene service providers, to develop and implement business continuity plan including water planning (see World Bank tool below)
- Support utilities in strengthening data collection systems, such as monitoring of water levels and quality, and leakage as well as maintenance of hygiene services.
- Support service providers to rapidly innovate products and service delivery models to close critical gaps
- Planning of commodities and supplies needed for continued operation to guarantee of supply for at least 3-month period and identifying sources of products and contingency planning.
- Undertake expansion of urban WASH services in vulnerable underserved areas or to vulnerable underserved groups.
- Service providers are supported to follow guidelines to reduce transmission risks.
- Ensure human resource capacity is sufficient to continue providing WASH services.
- Advocate for grants or low-interest loans for rebuilding WASH businesses and building their capacity, including in financial literacy.

Guidance and documents

- COVID Financial Impact Assessment Tool for Water and Sanitation Providers – Tool ([Link](#)). This is a financial planning tool to help water service providers quantify the financial impact on their operations and make evidence-based justifications for additional funding as a response to the pandemic to maintain and expand water resources during this critical period, regardless of the source of that additional funding. COVID Financial Impact Assessment Tool for Water and Sanitation Providers – User Guide ([Link](#)).

2.4 Supply chain for users

OBJECTIVE: Supply chains for essential WASH products and services are strengthened and diversified to ensure increased availability, quality and continuity of supply.

UNICEF roles:

- Promote cluster/sector-wide market assessments, analysis and ongoing monitoring for WASH commodities and products services to ensure the WASH market systems are robust and capable of responding to fluctuations and disruptions
- Ensure that UNICEF's and WASH Sector's procurement and response will not have a detrimental effect on product pricing or broader market availability of WASH commodities, given that some commodities, for example soap, are likely to be in high demand throughout the COVID-19 response.

- Support monitoring of availability and prices of hygiene products and WASH supplies
- Identify risks to the supply chain and highlight impending or actual stock-outs while ensuring humanitarian principles are upheld (i.e. separate behavior and branding to respect impartiality/independence).
- In case of supply shortages, prioritise entry and distribution of imported goods, and/or support existing local producers of soap/hygiene/MHM products or chemicals for water treatment
- Provide direct support to WASH market systems based on market analysis results which includes capacity building, financial/technical support to traders, infrastructure and access support, etc.
- Strengthen the supply chain of all products and materials needed to operate water, hygiene and sanitation services (disinfectants, chemicals, spare parts, etc.).
- Advocate for correct management of waste generated in the process of water purification and wastewater treatment (e.g. sewage sludge) by optimizing and prioritizing the use of domestic technologies.
- Strengthen the supply chain of basic products for family hygiene (soap, hand sanitizing gels, menstrual hygiene products, toilet paper, etc.) and domestic water treatment (chlorine tablets, water filters, etc.) through market systems approaches.
- While considering local market dynamics and doing the least harm, explore new partnerships with private sector and business associations to mitigate supply chain interruptions, stockouts and address affordability/ price fluctuations.
- Support injection of employment opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled WASH labor in early recovery phase of COVID-19 crisis (i.e. cash for work)
- Avoid extending in-kind assistance longer than necessary in order to avoid harming local WASH market recovery (however, public health imperative).
- Advocacy to mitigate supply chain interruptions, stock outs and ensure affordability of products and services.
- Advocacy for local production and distribution of supplies with focus on reaching the most vulnerable population.
- Advocacy for leveraging domestic revenue mobilization to facilitate the WASH supply chain and address the evolving economic crisis, as private WASH businesses are exposed to significant financial losses at this time. This includes using taxation systems to offer relief for businesses during the emergency and recovery periods. This could also involve lending to/availing financing for WASH businesses to shield them from bankruptcy.

Guidance and documents

- Document from Supply Division “COVID-19 WASH Supply Considerations”
 - Local procurement of essential commodities, including WASH kits where appropriate;
 - Support to local production of commodities, such as hand sanitizer, in response to local shortages;
 - Support innovation on local production of hand hygiene stations to promote affordable and sustainable hand washing practices;
 - Strategic use of contributions-in-kind from the private sector, especially from within countries, considering local/regional production places and existing networks;
 - Strengthening of local markets to ensure widespread availability and affordability of key products;

- Use of the Procurement Services modality to support government procurement, from local markets where possible;
- Support to supply chains for critical consumables to prevent disruption of essential water supply and sanitation services;
- Support to development of low-cost WASH technologies;
- Tax relief/reduction on essential imported WASH supplies and products e.g. water treatment chemical and spare parts - within document on Handwashing Stations and Supplies for the COVID-19 response ([Link](#))

2.5 Households

OBJECTIVE: All children and their families in rural and urban settings have affordable access to quality WASH goods and services essential for meeting their basic needs, including the specific needs of women and girls.

Government roles:

- Lead scale up of unconditional cash transfers to eligible populations.
- Inclusion of WASH related costs (quality products and services) in the multi-purpose cash (MPC) transfer value (i.e. social protection programs) based on the relevant minimum expenditure basket
- Monitoring of WASH utilization from MPC programs
- Strengthen partnerships with social enterprises and community-based organizations for inclusive community engagement and resilience building at individual, household and communal level.
- Lead evidence-based behavior change programming which aims to address behavioral barriers to accessing and utilizing WASH services

UNICEF roles:

- Support expansion and scale up of existing social protection programmes and unconditional cash transfers to populations in need through the provision of technical and/or financial support to government
- Support humanitarian cash transfer programmes where social protection systems do not exist or cannot be fully leveraged
- Develop humanitarian cash transfer programs based on market analysis and context specific barriers faced by vulnerable population (i.e. refugee access, informal settlements/freedom of movement).
- Encourage its country offices to leverage collaborative activities undertaken by Cash Working Groups and other coordination fora and engaging other actors as relevant. Collaboration with other agencies and organizations may accelerate the response by building on response infrastructures that already exist, including specific UN Common Cash System activities.
- Ensure complete mapping of vulnerable populations and what role WASH sector partners can have to complement government's social protection programs

Guidance and documents

- Cash transfer documents (see Financing section above)

2.6 Institutions

OBJECTIVE: Ensure continuity of WASH services and products in support of other basic social services: Health, Education, Nutrition.

Government roles:

- Train health care workers and teachers on infection prevention and control
- Train teachers on WASH generally
- Train health workers on WASHFIT implementation.
- Mainstream WASH indicators into Education Management Information Systems and Health Management Information Systems to track service delivery and coverage and overall, strengthen monitoring and reporting.

UNICEF roles:

- UNICEF WASH work closely with the education sector to ensure all schools have IPC measures in place so that they are clean and safe environments for students to return to;
- UNICEF WASH work closely with the health sector to ensure all healthcare facilities are safe environments and do not promulgate the pandemic.
- Support governments to implement the Eight Practical Steps to universal WASH access.
- Provide technical support to governments to ensure that standards for WASH in the respective sectors are developed, implemented, monitored and adhered to, to improve the quality of WASH services.
- Support advocacy to policy makers, decision makers, partners organizations, relevant government ministries, donors and implementors to improve WASH services in schools and health care facilities.
- Support coordination efforts amongst WASH in schools and WASH in health care facilities communities to ensure efficiencies and effectiveness of service delivery.

WASH in Schools Guidance:

- WHO/UNICEF Technical brief on water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management in the context of COVID-19
- Situation update, JMP Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: special focus on COVID-19: ([Link](#))
- Framework for reopening of schools: ([Link](#))
- WHO Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19: ([Link](#))
- UN Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond AUGUST 2020: ([Link](#))
- UNICEF/IFRC/WHO Interim guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools: ([Link](#))
- WASH and Infection Prevention and Control Measures in Schools: ([Link](#))
- Preparing for reopening of schools:10 Immediate WASH in Schools actions: ([Link](#))
- Knowledge map for school children, families and education practitioners – by the WinS network: Resources on the occasion of hand hygiene day 5th May 2020 ([Link](#))
- Preparing for reopening of schools: Checklists to support safe opening of schools: ([Link](#))
- Essential WASH supplies for schools
- UNICEF/ GIZ Compendium of group handwashing facilities: ([Link](#))
- WASH in schools indicators (KoBo Tool) ([Link](#))

WASH in Healthcare Facilities Guidance:

- WASH and Infection Prevention and Control in Health Care Facilities UNICEF Technical Note ([Link](#))
- WASH and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures in Households and Public spaces ([Link](#))
- WHO/UNICEF Water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management for the COVID-19 virus: interim guidance ([Link](#))
- Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and considerations during severe shortages WHO Interim Guidance ([Link](#))
- Infection prevention and control during health care when novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection is suspected: WHO Interim guidance, 25 January 2020 ([Link](#))
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) COVID-19 Response from Governments, Regulators and Utilities ([Link](#))
- WHO/UNICEF/IFRC Guidance on Community-based Health Care Including Outreach and Campaigns in the Context of COVID-19 ([Link](#))
- ROSA COVID19 Infographics GN4- Water, Sanitation, Hygiene & Waste Management for COVID19 virus
- ROSA COVID19 Infographics GN5- WASH in IPC Measures in Health Care Facilities (HCF)
- The COVID-19 risk communication package for healthcare facilities WHO WPRO ([Link](#))
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection in non-health-care settings in the context of COVID-19 WHO WPRO ([Link](#))
- Infection prevention during transfer and transport of patients with suspected COVID-19 requiring hospital care WHO WPRO ([Link](#))
- How to put on and remove Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) WHO WPRO ([Link](#))
- Handwashing in low resource settings WHO WPRO ([Link](#))