WASH Needs Assessment Strategy

Version 1

Guidance Document

WASH Cluster
Water Sanitation Hygiene

CONTENTS

1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document aims to guide National WASH Cluster Platforms in developing the needs assessment and analysis strategy for the response. The purpose of such strategy is to support the coordination platform in gathering the required data, when it is needed, to inform decision making for the response as part of the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC).

An assessment strategy should be developed by the National WASH Cluster Platforms, should be informed through inputs from cluster partners, validated through the SAG (if available), and in-line with intersectoral processes and priorities as defined by the Humanitarian Coordinator.

This document will outline the main steps and considerations that should be taken when developing the strategy, including identifying information needs, assessing the capacity and resources available for primary data collection, and improving coordination around needs assessment and analysis. While the assessment strategy will look different for various types of crisis (protracted, complex emergencies, sudden and slow-onset) the guiding questions in this document will be applicable to all.

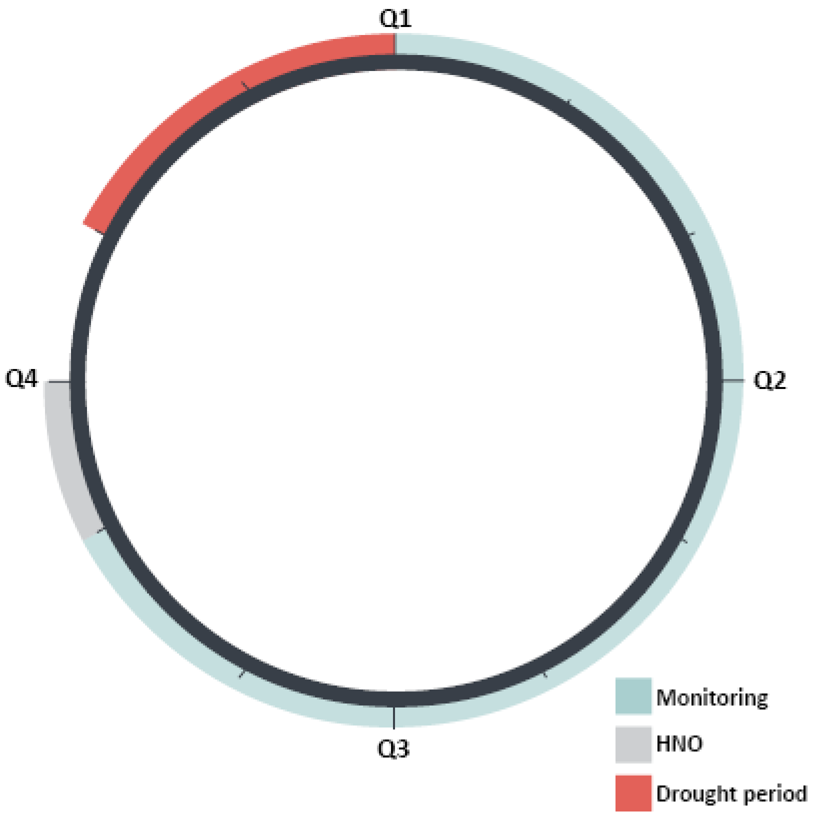
This document will be updated as needed. If you want to request specific support for your country's assessment strategy, please reach out to gwchelp@unicef.org.

2 WHAT NEEDS TO BE INFORMED AND WHEN

Identifying what and when data is needed for is the first step when developing the assessment strategy. WASH data needs to be available not only for WASH specific decision making but is integral in intersectoral coordination and response plans. Keeping in mind the wider coordination systems and actors is crucial throughout the development of the WASH assessment strategy. Some key decision-making processes to plan around are:

- **Strategic response plans**
  - Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO; see WASH Operational Response Plan and Needs Analysis on CTK): Conducted yearly normally around August – September
  - Mid-year reviews: Providing an update to the HNO for rapidly changing contexts
  - Flash appeals: The initial response plan following a sudden-onset emergency
- **Operational response**
  - Rapid needs assessments following a sudden onset emergency
  - Seasonal assessments
  - Baseline and endline assessments for monitoring
  - In-depth assessments for programme design (e.g. KAP survey, infrastructure mapping etc.)

Figure 1: Example of planning timeline



2.1 Set the parameters

Together with the coordination mechanism, the WASH coordination platform should define:

- What **geographical** areas data is needed for (the whole country or specific areas prioritised by the response)
    - For the HNO, this is defined by OCHA and is most often at administrative level 2.
- At which administrative level is data required for
- What needs to be represented in terms of **population groups**, age, gender, minority groups etc.

2.2 Identify WASH indicators

Data collected by both WASH partners and other actors needs to be as **harmonized** as possible to ensure data can be compared. To ensure this, standardized WASH indicators should be developed that define the type of WASH information to be collected.

The list of **indicators** should:

- Cover different levels of analysis (household, community, infrastructure etc.),
- Be inclusive of various cross-cutting themes (gender, disability and inclusion etc.),
- Be developed based on global standards, but contextualised where needed
- Be decided in coordination with cluster partners and validated by the SAG.

It is recommended to select a few core indicators that should always be included in any WASH assessment (or where WASH is a component of a multi-sectoral assessment) to ensure that at least the minimum required information is collected. It is important to share the list of relevant WASH indicators with all data collection actors and all WASH partners to ensure the same type of data is captured.

Find list of WASH indicators and questions recommended by the GWC on the CTK under key guidance and tools.

3 ASSESSMENT DIAGNOSTICS

Start to define the assessment landscape to understand what information exists, what the gaps are, who are the assessment actors, what are the capacities within the response to collect data, what are the limitations and challenges, etc.

3.1 Map out assessment architecture

Assessment planning should never take place in isolation and it is important to coordinate and discuss within the cluster and with other actors to ensure there is no overlap of exercises, to be up to date on existing data sources/assessments and to ensure the population is not over-assessed, leading to assessment fatigue. Therefore, it is good to first map out key stakeholders to engage throughout the HPC. Below is a list of a few actors and forums the cluster should be engaged with:

Who	How
Assessment Working Group (AWG) & Information Management Working Group (IMWG) (if any)	The AWG/IMWG should be informed of any planned WASH specific assessment. This is also the forum to learn of assessments planned by other actors, and where WASH indicators included the cluster should engage to ensure harmonization of indicators and other activities.
SAG	The SAG should be involved in assessment planning and design. They should also be part of validating assessment results and findings.
Other assessment actors/initiatives	If there is no AWG or IMWG it is even more important to be connected with other data collection actors/initiatives such as IOM-DTM, REACH, MICS, DHS, etc. to ensure the cluster is aware of ongoing/planned assessments and have the ability to inform the WASH components and use the data when available.
Cluster partners	Cluster partners should be involved in identifying or highlighting priority areas, for example they could raise issues with information gaps in their area of operation that could trigger an assessment.
Government ministries	Relevant government ministries should to the extent possible be involved in coordination, planning, and execution of assessments. It is important to remember to align tools and methodologies.
CASH Working Group	For information related to market assessments it is good to engage with the CASH Working Groups.
Other clusters	The WASH cluster should engage with other relevant clusters to improve assessment coordination and to make sure information is passed on between clusters relevant to WASH. For example, displacement, food security (IPC), health and nutrition data is important when conducting WASH analysis, as is WASH data for these sectors.

3.2 Identify existing information – who collects, what is being collected, when and how?

The next step is to do a secondary desk review of existing assessment initiatives that are either fully WASH focused, have a WASH component as part of a multi-sectoral approach, or is relevant to WASH in any other way such as health and nutrition indicators.

During the secondary desk review focus on the following (see CTK for resources on secondary data reviews):

- What existing assessment initiatives exist that have a WASH component?
- Is there a response wide multi-sectoral needs assessment conducted?
- What data exist from other clusters that is relevant to WASH?
- What data is collected on a regular basis and what is ad-hoc?
- Who is collecting the data?
- Is data available based on the parameters set out in section 2.1?
  - That is, does data exist at the required administrative levels, does it cover **all** the geographical priority areas, and does it cover all the required population groups? Perhaps there is good data, covering the right population groups at the correct administrative levels needed but only for some regions; or perhaps data is only available for displaced populations but not for the host communities.
- Does the available data accurately align with the WASH indicators defined in section 2.2?
  - Different phrasing of questions and response options can make data incomparable. For example, data might be available on percentage of people with access to soap, but if you decided that you need information on people using functional handwashing facilities with soap and water then the existing data only answers half of your information need.
- What are the challenges for collecting data?
  - Identify hard-to-reach areas, access constraints, and other operational challenges that might hinder data being collected in certain areas.

Once all information has been reviewed, a table like the below can be used to create a better picture of the assessment landscape:

Agency	Name	Methodology	Coverage	Frequency	Sector	Status
IOM-DTM	IDP site assessment	FGD, KII, Observation	All IDP sites	Bi-Monthly	Multi-sectoral	Not aligned with WASH indicators
IOM-DTM	Village assessment	FGD, KII, Observation	Host localities	Bi-Monthly	Multi-sectoral	Aligned with WASH indicators
Ministry of water	Infrastructure assessment	Observation	All admin 2 in region X & Y	Yearly	WASH	Not aligned with WASH indicators
REACH	Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA)	Household	All admin 2	Yearly	Multi-sectoral	Aligned with WASH indicators
Nutrition TWIG	SMART survey	Household	All admin 2 in region Z	Ad-hoc	Nutrition	Ok – no direct WASH indicators
Government	Pre-harvest assessment	Household	All admin 1	Seasonally	Multi-sectoral	Aligned with WASH indicators

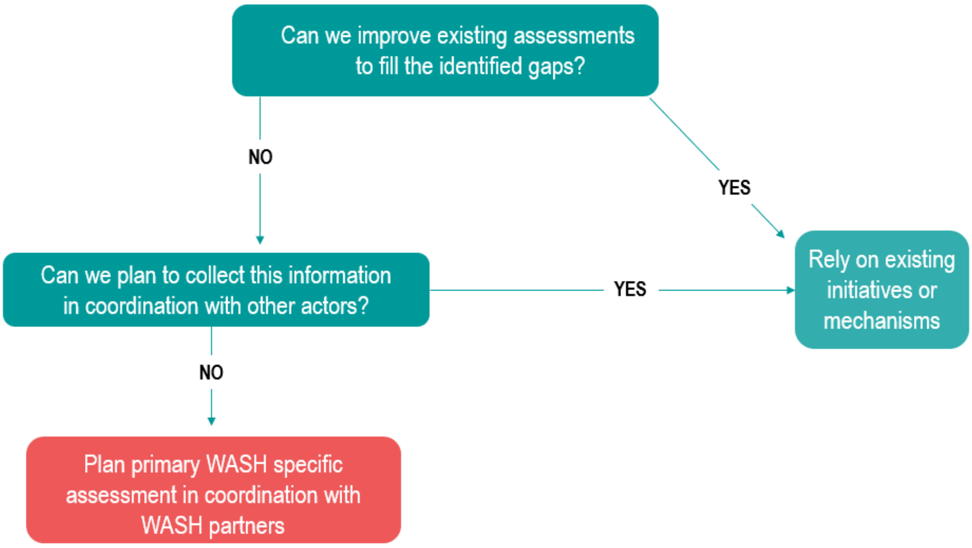
Bear in mind that needs indicators are different from response indicators and hence might require different data sources than what you would use in for example 4/5W. For example, you will not know the hygiene needs by using information on number of people reached by hygiene kits.

3.3 Identify information gaps

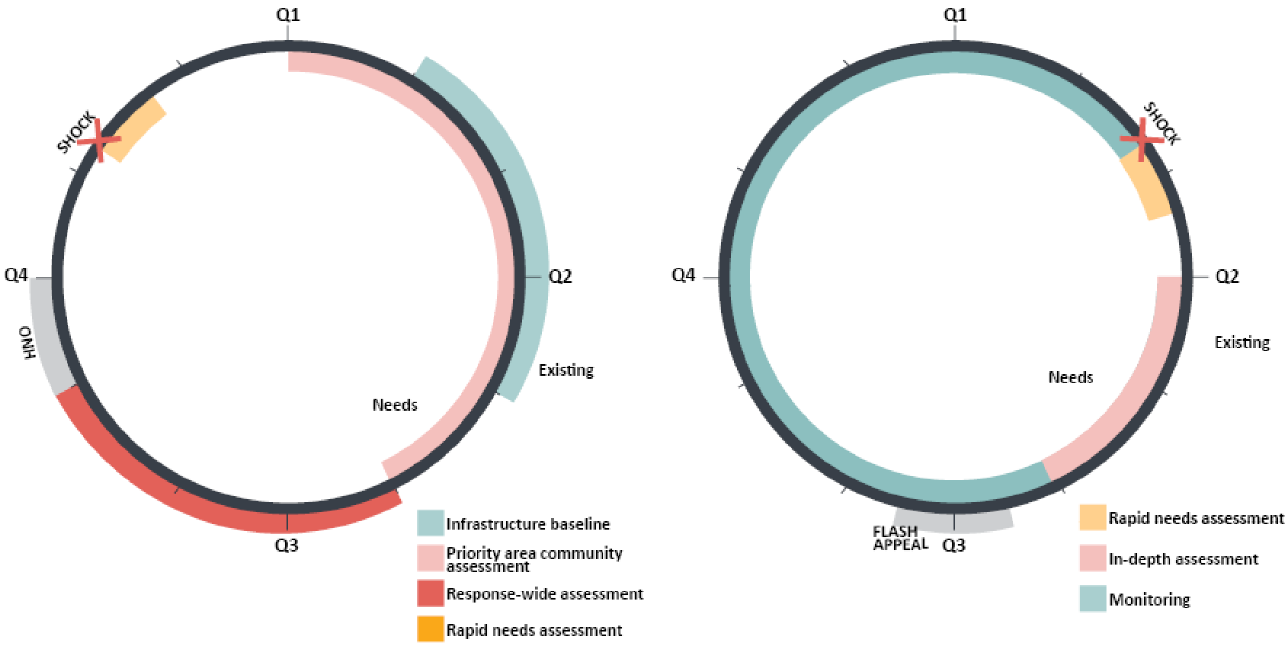
Based on the above identification of existing information and data collection initiatives, start mapping out **what information is needed but currently does not exist**. When doing so, keep the following points in mind:

- What are the gaps in terms of geographical locations, population groups, admin levels and indicators?
- What information exist but is currently outdated due to changes in the context?

Based on this, a decision should be made on whether there is a need to collect additional data and if the cluster should engage in establishing a system for primary data collection. The following questions can guide this decision:



With the assessment planning timeline in place and the mapping exercise of key information needs completed, a full picture of the needs against timeline should be clear. Below are two examples to illustrate this:



4 PLAN PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Again, it is important to note that assessments need to be well coordinated, and the benefits versus the costs, resources and potential additional burden on the affected populations must be carefully considered. To the extent possible, assessments should be conducted with other stakeholders to minimise the number of activities. However, sometimes there is a need for very specific WASH information, which is when the cluster should either coordinate or lead **WASH specific assessments.**

Information on **all the steps of the primary data collection process** can be found on the CTK and in Annex 1.

5 BUILD ASSESSMENT CAPACITY

Regardless if the WASH cluster needs to coordinate primary WASH data collection or not, it is crucial to ensure the cluster and partners have the needed capacity, resources, and systems in place to be able to identify gaps on an ongoing basis, plan, coordinate, implement, and disseminate data and assessment findings. A few points to keep in mind:

- Set up and maintain an **assessment registry** where completed, ongoing, and planned assessments by WASH partners and other actors can be tracked
    - See example on CTK under other tools
- Set up a **data storing platform** where WASH specific and other relevant data can be saved and accessed
    - Ensure data protection guidelines are set up and adhered to, for example not ever sharing personalised information that could identify a person interviewed, not sharing gps locations of sensitive locations or infrastructure (depending on the context), having the consent by the owner of the data to share the information etc.
- Set up a platform where **core tools** can be accessed by partners.
    - For example, list of core WASH indicators, rapid assessment tools, comprehensive/in-depth assessment tools, infrastructure tools etc.
- Conduct a **capacity mapping** of partners in regard to assessments
- Provide **trainings** throughout the year on assessment planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting for partners
    - Make the training material available on a shared platform.

ANNEX 1 GWC Needs Assessment Guide to Key Resources

This document is aiming to provide a brief overview of all the key steps in the assessment process from planning, designing, implementing, and analysing findings. Specific guidance documents and templates for all steps of the assessments are available under each sub-section below.

1. **Set the objective and scope:** Objectives and scope should be developed for each assessment cycle. It will help define what information should be collected, where and how.
2. **Conduct a SDR:** The Secondary Data Review (SDR) should ideally be conducted throughout the assessment cycle, i.e. to identify information gaps, to collect existing data to help identify indicators, to triangulate final findings etc.
3. **Develop Indicators & Questionnaires:** While indicators and questions will vary depending on the objective of the assessment, it is good practice to follow a core set of standard indicators developed and tested (see GWC indicator bank) to ensure consistency and comparability across time and space. While adhering to global standards, indicators and questionnaires also need to be adjusted to the local context.
4. **Design the Methodology:** The methodology should be designed based on the objectives, scope, resources available, time and access. In the methodology design stage, you will identify the unit of measurement for the assessment, i.e. at what level should the data be collected (e.g. individual, household, community etc.), the methods to collect the data, i.e. through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observations, household interviews etc., and the potential sampling methods, i.e. how and according to what criteria are used to select respondents.
5. **Follow up Data Collection:** It is important to follow up closely during the data collection with daily data checks to improve the quality of the data and to spot potential issues and follow up with enumerators.
6. **Analyse the data:** To analyse the data, an analysis plan should be developed, which is guided by the indicators, in order to answer the research questions chosen for the assessment. The data analysis plan will help in describing the situation, interpreting the effects and potential causes and anticipating possible evolutions.
7. **Share the information:** Findings should be disseminated to the selected audience in a timely and effective way. It is always good to make the clean and anonymised data available to an external audience (if appropriate) together with the other information products, e.g. report, factsheets, maps etc.