

# QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

GUIDANCE NOTE V1 | MAY 2020



**WASH Cluster**  
Water Sanitation Hygiene



## ACRONYMS

QAAP	Quality Assurance and Accountability Project
QAAS	Quality Assurance and Accountability System
AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
TWG	Technical Working Group
GWC	Global WASH Cluster
SOF	Strategic Operational Framework
ToR	Terms of Reference
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
DMAIC	Define - Measure - Analyse - Improve - Control
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## AUDIENCE

This guidance is designed to be used by National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platforms (NHWCPs), including Humanitarian WASH Cluster / cluster coordination unit (includes Cluster Coordinator, Information Management Officers, Assessment Specialists, Sub-Cluster Coordinators), in addition to WASH Partner Organisations, Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) members and Technical Working Groups (TWGs). The guidance may also be useful to support WASH partners to develop and apply QAAS within their own programmes or organisations.



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## INTRODUCTION

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**This guidance provides practical, step-by-step guidance to National WASH Clusters and partners in country to support effective management of quality and accountability at the coordination level in humanitarian WASH responses.**

### WHY QAAS?

Humanitarian crises are complex and dynamic. Reliably delivering against commitments to quality and accountability, improving over time and ensuring continued relevance despite changing contexts requires management approaches that are data-driven and adaptive.

Current response monitoring practices often focus on tracking activities or reach, rather than understanding whether the response is safe, inclusive, participatory and effective. This risks the response being managed to maximise outputs or beneficiary numbers, without understanding whether real progress is being made towards objectives or that commitments to quality are being fulfilled.

Quality Assurance and Accountability Systems (QAAS) are a way of addressing this, while strengthening accountability to the affected population by providing confidence that standards for quality will be met and maintained over time.

### ROLE OF NATIONAL WASH CLUSTERS

This document specifically focusses on ensuring quality and accountability are appropriately addressed in a collective way at the *national coordination level*. While WASH Partners are responsible for delivering their own programmes and should have adequate systems in place for ensuring quality and accountability, national WASH Clusters have an important role in supporting quality by influencing the way that partners work collectively to provide humanitarian assistance. This role includes:

- Setting clear priorities, strategic objectives, expectations and ways of working that have the commitment of all partners;
- Creating an enabling environment for collective quality assurance through building trust, taking advantage of collective experience and building mutual accountability;
- Coordinating data collection, information sharing and joint analysis; and
- Creating opportunities for routine review, evaluation and institutionalisation of learning.

As a collective process, QAAS relies upon the engagement of all WASH

Cluster<sup>1</sup> partners in definition, data collection, analysis, improvement and learning.

While different stakeholders play specific roles in managing quality, an effective QAAS is the joint responsibility of the Cluster Lead Agency, the Cluster Coordinator, Cluster partners at national and subnational level and donors.

## WHAT IS QUALITY?

The operational definition of quality in WASH responses is based on the standards and systems of the National Government, as well as international humanitarian standards such as CHS and Sphere.

Quality includes both what the response achieves (outcomes) and how it is carried out (process). Just as coverage gaps refer to instances where a response is failing to reach all targeted people, quality gaps describe instances where a response is failing to meet agreed standards for quality and accountability. Quality gaps arise because of the way that humanitarian assistance is designed and/or implemented but may be most apparent when the consequences of those gaps are seen in the outcomes of WASH programming, or the way that people affected by crisis feel about the way assistance is provided.

Although quality can be defined and measured, it is important to remember that humanitarian response will always face external constraints. The aim should be to provide the highest quality possible in the context by making improvements over time, rather than reaching an absolute level of quality.

While this guidance builds upon and updates previous GWC guidance, it should be considered complementary to:

- National standards and systems set up by authorities in the country of response
- [The Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\)](#)
- [The Sphere Handbook](#)
- [IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Guidance](#)
- [IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module](#)
- [Global WASH Cluster Coordination Toolkit](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This document uses the term WASH Cluster to include all National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platforms

## OVERVIEW OF QAAS

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### WHAT IS QUALITY ASSURANCE?

A Quality Assurance and Accountability System (QAAS) is an approach to response coordination that supports results-oriented, evidence-based decision making with the aim of ensuring that standards for quality and accountability in humanitarian WASH responses are met and maintained, with continuous improvement.

It provides a way to monitor a WASH response against jointly agreed, contextually relevant framework of quality and accountability standards that integrate recognised national and international frameworks.

QAAS is an ongoing, collective process carried out at the coordination level to ensure that the humanitarian WASH response:

- avoids doing harm (e.g. increasing protection risks, contaminating water resources);
- is effectively working towards strategic goals; (e.g. controlling public and environmental health risks, providing basic WASH services); and
- is meeting agreed standards and ways of working (e.g. commitments to accountability and participation under CHS, technical standards in Sphere).

It comprises of a **modular analytical framework** that defines core standards, indicators and monitoring approaches that should be used to routinely monitor quality and accountability and a **quality assurance process** that links this monitoring to operational decision making through joint analysis and planning.

### HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM EXISTING SYSTEMS?

The objective of the QAAS approach is to provide a routine overview of the response that highlights quality gaps that can be hidden through existing monitoring approaches.

While existing response monitoring approaches exist, they typically focus on monitoring activities, outputs and reach rather than outcomes and quality. This approach prioritises upstream accountability above accountability to affected populations. Without information from the field about effectiveness, safety, inclusivity, participation and feedback, partners at the coordination level are unable to effectively manage quality and accountability.

QAAS is...	QAAS is not...
...a lightweight, ongoing appraisal of key quality gaps with a focus on triggering action	...a formal evaluation or impact assessment
...owned and managed jointly by the WASH coordination platform for internal use	...an additional, top-down, reporting requirement
...implemented jointly by all WASH Cluster participants	...carried out by the WASH Cluster Coordinator alone
...based on good-enough monitoring of a limited number of key indicators in order to identify where course correction is needed	...an attempt to produce detailed or generalisable statistics
...based on contextualising standards and guidance that already exist	...a set of new requirements, standards or expectations

Table 1: What QAAS is and is not

## THE MODULAR ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The modular analytical framework provides guidance on the key standards, indicators, benchmarks and data collection approaches required to monitor compliance with the wide range of humanitarian standards. It is designed to ensure that monitoring approaches can identify commonly experienced quality and accountability issues while reducing the burden of data collection and reporting. It should be used to consider what information is required to support decision making at the cluster level.

## THE QAAS PROCESS

The QAAS process proposed here is adapted from the Define-Measure-Analyse-Improve-Control<sup>2</sup> (DMAIC) cycle (Figure 1). DMAIC is a data-driven process used for improving, optimising and stabilising business processes and designs across a wide range of industries.

The approach combines a continuous process of monitoring, analysis and improvement with a periodic review of lessons learned. Monitoring is focussed on the collection of actionable, outcome-focussed metrics and prioritises understanding ‘field reality’ through the perspectives of those affected by crisis. Continuous institutionalisation of the knowledge gained from identifying and addressing quality gaps is achieved through periodic review of lessons learned and the revision of key definition documents (i.e. Strategic Operational Framework) to ensure they continue to reflect changes to the context and humanitarian response.

<sup>2</sup> Here adapted to Define – Measure – Analyse – Improve – Learn for the humanitarian context

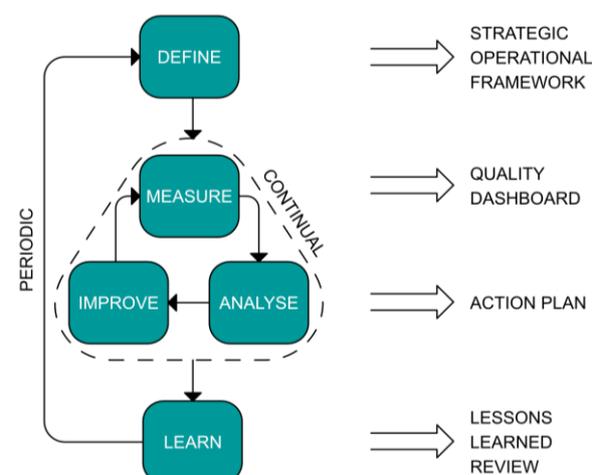


Figure 1: The QAAS process and Key Outputs

The table below summarises the steps involved, which are described in more detail in the QAAS Step-by-step chapter.

STEP	DESCRIPTION	OUTPUT	TIMING
1	<b>DEFINE</b> The modular analytical framework is used to set Key Quality Indicators (KQI) and benchmarks appropriate to the context. The timing, approach and roles for data collection, reporting and analysis are defined.	QAAS definition within the Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)	Sudden onset: Day 14 - 30 Protracted: November-December
2	<b>MEASURE</b> KQIs are continuously monitored. Data is regularly reported to the cluster IMO for collation and production of the quality snapshot.	Quality snapshot	Continuous measurement, analysis and improvement through regular coordination meetings and ad-hoc alerting of priority gaps.
3	<b>ANALYSE</b> The Quality Snapshot is shared with cluster partners and quality gaps are identified and prioritised. Action plans for addressing quality gaps are developed and shared.	Action plan	
4	<b>IMPROVE</b> Action plans are implemented and monitored Information about issues identified and action plans is fed back to the affected population	Corrective actions Feedback to the affected population	
5	<b>LEARN</b> Trends, monitoring data and action plans are periodically reviewed and lessons learned are documented. The SOF is revised to ensure it is appropriate to the context and response objectives	Lessons learned Updated QAAS / SOF	Periodically Sudden onset: 3-9 months after onset Protracted: July-August

## QAAS PROCESS STEP-BY-STEP

### DEFINE

**Contextualise the modular analytical framework to reflect appropriate standards, indicators, benchmarks and monitoring approaches.**

<b>OUTPUT</b>	Contextualised modular analytical framework based on the revised Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)	
<b>WHEN</b>	<b>SUDDEN ONSET</b> Day 14 - 30	<b>PROTRACTED</b> Annual revision after HRP finalised (November-December)
<b>WHO</b>	TWG to draft or propose revisions and SAG endorses reviewed SOF	

This step forms the foundation of the rest of the QAAS and it is important that WASH Cluster Partners contribute, and can commit, to the definitions agreed upon. The role of contextualising the modular analytical framework can be handed to a working group, with input from specialists from other sectors as needed. The draft should be shared with all stakeholders for comment before being validated by the SAG on behalf of the cluster.

#### DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK (SOF)

During the Define stage, the Strategic Operational Framework (SOF) is collectively reviewed based on an analysis of context, strategic objectives and any learning from previous cycles. This document should be based on National Standards and systems that should be adapted or supplemented by international humanitarian standards where necessary.

The SOF defines the key standards, indicators and benchmarks agreed by the WASH Cluster Partners for monitoring quality and accountability, along with standard approaches, designs and ways of working based on the available evidence base.

The Define stage should be incorporated into preparedness activities in close coordination with national authorities where possible.

#### Convene working group to develop or adapt the modular analytical framework for quality

- The working group should be comprised of technical experts that broadly reflect the Cluster membership (including Government Authorities, National and International NGOs, UN Agencies and observers).

#### Select analytical framework modules

- Review the cluster strategic objectives set in the HRP and select relevant modules from the analytical framework.
- Public Health Risk, WASH Service Provision and People-Centred Programming are the recommended minimum core modules that should be applied in every humanitarian WASH response.

**For each module, set appropriate benchmarks for each Key Quality Indicator (KQI).**

- Benchmarks should be set by referring to national government standards, international humanitarian standards and information from community engagement and feedback.
- Different benchmarks may be required for different targeted groups and across different locations.

**For each indicator, agree approaches for data collection, reporting and analysis**

- Use the modular analytical framework as a basis for deciding the data that is reported to the cluster. Limit the requirements for partner reporting to data that is useful for analysis and decision making at the cluster level.
- Consult each module for guidance on monitoring approaches and data collection.
- Identify existing data sources from assessments, operational research and partner monitoring. Identify where relevant data is being collected by different clusters and plan to include this in the quality snapshot.
- Establish a mechanism and timeline for routine data reporting, analysis and action planning, including how tasks will be shared between national and sub-national levels.

**Present the contextualised analytical framework to the cluster for comment, the Strategic Advisory Group should validate it once concerns have been addressed.**

**COMBINING DATA**

Combining different data sources during the analysis stage is simplified when indicators and approaches are harmonised between partners and third parties. This should be considered when agreeing terms of reference for third party assessment / monitoring teams.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION

- Start by selecting the most appropriate core modules from the Modular Analytical Framework and rapidly contextualise benchmarks using available secondary data and information collected from the field
- Focus on setting out the most basic standards initially while gaining buy-in from partners, plan to review the strategic operational framework within 3-6 months based on the experience and information gained from the initial phase
- Capitalise on quick-wins such as sharing standard designs for safer and more accessible WASH facilities based on experience from other contexts, to be adapted as more information about accessibility and acceptability requirements is collected
- Identify the most critical risks (e.g. public health, protection/GBV) and population groups (e.g. children, women, marginalised communities, older people and people with disabilities) likely to be most vulnerable to ensure that different groups are included in rapid assessments
- Identify the most critical risks of doing harm and build approaches to monitor them into the monitoring plan.
- Consult with cross-cutting specialists (e.g. sex, age and disability inclusion, protection and GBV, accountability, social cohesion, markets) to understand multi-sector linkages
- Work with the Inter Sector Coordination Group to ensure accountability and feedback systems are put in place as soon as possible and ensure there is an agreed mechanism for referring issues raised, considering sensitive issues (such as GBV, PSEA, and child safeguarding) that need safe and ethical referrals as per GBV sub-cluster guidance.
- Plan to review the strategic operational framework within 3 months based on the experience and information collected through quality monitoring

## MEASURE → ANALYSE → IMPROVE

**Continuously monitor the response against the modular analytical framework and regularly update the status of key quality indicators in a quality snapshot. Identify and prioritise quality gaps and develop action plans to address them.**

The measure, analyse and improve phases of the QAAS should occur continuously, with monitoring data being fed from the field to update the quality snapshot. In the analyse phase, the quality snapshots are used to ‘trigger’ conversations between partners about where quality gaps exist and how they will be addressed. Action plans for improvement may be developed by a single partner, or multi-laterally depending on the scope of the gap. Information about the gaps identified and corrective actions planned should be fed back to the affected population for validation.

### MEASURE

**Collect data as set out in the modular analytical framework and produce regular quality snapshots to support further analysis**

<b>OUTPUT</b>	Quality Snapshot
<b>WHEN</b>	Continuously, with quality snapshot updated on a regular basis as agreed in the SOF
<b>WHO</b>	Partners and Third Parties report up to date information to the WASH Cluster IMO for collation

**Partners and third parties conduct monitoring and periodically report data to the WASH cluster IMO**

- The frequency of data collection and reporting should reflect the stability of the context and balance the need for up to date information while minimising partner’s reporting burden. Different approaches may be required for different population groups or locations.
- The WASH Cluster IMO collates information from partner reporting and combines with information from other sources to form the quality snapshot

**Reported data is collated, cleaned and validated**

- Data validation should include site visits to ensure information accurately reflects the reality on the ground.
- The triangulation of information from different sources can help to identify where additional validation checks are required.
- The perceptions of different affected groups are an important touchstone for understanding how data should be interpreted.
- Alerts from community feedback and complaints mechanisms can be used to trigger additional field level spot checks, although care must be taken not to put individuals at risk of harm.

### Quality snapshot is shared with cluster partners

- The IMO shares up to date information on all key quality indicators, disaggregated by sex, age, disability and location where appropriate. Online dynamic dashboards (e.g. PowerBI), spreadsheet charts or static documents may be used, depending on capacity.
- The snapshot is shared before meetings where the updated results are presented and discussed along with potential corrective actions.
- Highlight where information gaps exist and note concerns about data quality

### DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

- Validation of the data reported to the cluster by partners is an important step in making sure that the quality snapshot reflects reality.
- Validation involves triangulating the reported data with other sources to understand whether they paint a similar picture.
- Regularly visiting field sites and comparing the situation with quality monitoring data reported can be an effective way to understand whether quality gaps are being sufficiently captured by the monitoring systems in place. This can be carried out by WASH Cluster monitoring teams, or through peer monitoring where partners carry out visits to sites where they are not actively working.
- Triangulation with secondary data sources, such as assessments, mapping or community engagement reports can also be used.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION

- Pro-actively seek out information on needs from key informants who can represent groups likely to be most at risk – for example women and girls, children and the elderly, those with disability – rather than attempting to collect generalisable statistics at an early stage
- Triangulate key informant data with other data sources, including secondary data, to ensure better accuracy in analysis and conclusions
- As soon as possible, ensure data collected is disaggregated by sex, age and disability so that comparisons can be made between different affected groups
- Use WASH facility checklists to monitor compliance with standard designs
- Prioritise the collection of feedback from different affected groups during field monitoring visits, be prepared to utilise this information even if it has not been collected as part of a formal methodology

**EXAMPLE QUALITY SNAPSHOT CHART**

The chart style show in Figure 2 is an example of how trends can be displayed both across time, and between age and sex groups. Setting standardised scoring criteria for different indicators allows for quick visual analysis of overall quality gaps.



Figure 2: Example excerpt from Quality Snapshot Myanmar

The chart shows the number of people living in sites with each quality score as well as the proportion of the total targeted population. Data gaps are highlighted to demonstrate where there is insufficient information to be able to calculate the quality score. Where scores are used, the limits of each score should be defined based on targets and minimum standards set in the SOF. Scores should be somewhat consistent across indicators in terms of what each represents, for example:

- 0: No / insufficient data reported
- 1: Significantly below minimum standard
- 2: Marginally below minimum standard
- 3: Marginally above minimum standard
- 4: Target reached

## ANALYSE

### WASH Cluster partners jointly analyse the information in the quality snapshot and develop action plans based on the quality gaps identified

<b>OUTPUT</b>	Action plans
<b>WHEN</b>	Continuously, updates and analysis to be discussed during regular sector meetings
<b>WHO</b>	Joint analysis can be carried out by all partners, or through existing TWG as appropriate. Input from thematic specialists where required.

#### Identify and prioritise quality gaps, trends and information gaps

- Detailed analysis of the data should be carried out collectively by Cluster Partners. Analysis may happen at the sub-national and/or national level depending on the coordination structure and capacity.
- Summarise key trends and identify where quality gaps exist.

#### Agree action plans to address quality gaps

- Identify and prioritise the immediate and contributing causes of quality gaps.
- Identify which factors can be directly controlled, what may be influenced through advocacy and what must be worked around.
- Agree actions to address quality gaps, prioritise 'quick wins' that are likely to be achievable and effective in the near term.
- Seek specialist advice and refer to global evidence to understand what has been effective in other contexts.
- Agree timelines and how progress will be monitored

#### CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION

- Identify and prioritise critical public health and protection/GBV risks between locations and affected groups
- Identify and plan to address the following quality gaps, in order of priority:
  - Instances where the response is, or risks, doing harm
  - Instances where the response is unlikely to meet objectives for all affected groups
  - Instances where the response is using resources inefficiently, or is undermining future transition to more sustainable approaches
- Emphasise joint responsibility for addressing quality gaps across the response, especially where there is a disparity in the capacity of Sector partners
- Use information about WASH quality gaps and barriers to addressing them to inform prioritisation at the inter-sector coordination level



### **CONTROL – INFLUENCE – ADAPT**

It is unlikely that WASH partners will be able to directly control all the causes of quality issues. Consider what can be controlled, what may be influenced through advocacy and what must be accepted. For example, changes to latrine design or hygiene promotion approaches may be directly controlled by partners, whereas access issues or shelter design may be influenced through advocacy to other stakeholders. It is important to identify and take appropriate action on those factors that may be controlled or influenced, whilst not getting stuck by those that cannot be.

## IMPROVE

### WASH Cluster Partners implement the agreed action plans and provide feedback to the affected population

<b>OUTPUT</b>	Improvements to programmes, feedback to communities
<b>WHEN</b>	Continuously, after action plan(s) are agreed
<b>WHO</b>	Partners as identified in the relevant action plan(s)

#### Implement action plans

- Address the immediate causes of quality gaps through direct action, changes to designs or ways of working.
- Address the root or systemic causes of quality gaps through influencing, in collaboration with wider stakeholders.
- Each responsible partner implements the actions agreed as monitoring continues, with support from other stakeholders as required.
- Information about issues identified and corrective actions taken is shared with appropriate stakeholders, including the affected community.
- Priority themes, trends and insights that can be used to inform the design of corrective actions are documented.
- Track the completion of corrective actions and continue to monitor for unintended consequences.

#### Feedback to the affected community

- Use existing feedback channels to discuss the quality gaps identified and plans for corrective actions with community groups.
- Make sure that feedback is given to those who are most affected by the issue.
- Engage with affected communities to confirm that the issues that are being addressed align with their priority.
- Wherever possible, communities should have a role in supporting corrective actions.

## LEARN

**The learn stage is a periodic opportunity to take a more strategic perspective on quality and accountability, to realign priorities and to identify and address course correction on a longer timescale.**

<b>OUTPUT</b>	Revised SOF and Modular Analytical Framework	
<b>WHEN</b>	<b>SUDDEN ONSET</b> After 3-9 months	<b>PROTRACTED</b> July-August prior to HNO process or as agreed
<b>WHO</b>	All WASH Cluster participants, technical specialists and representatives from other clusters as appropriate	

The SOF, and other key response documents as appropriate are updated to reflect changes to the context and improvements to methods and approaches. The QAAS is revised to include changes to the priority modules and standards as the response progresses to ensure that it continues to be appropriate, and relevant to the evolving context.

The lessons learned review should be informed by the data collected as part of quality monitoring as well as findings from programme evaluations, support visits, operational research and cluster technical working groups. It can be managed through a small, task-focussed working group, but should be inclusive of input from all WASH cluster participants. Contributions can be sought through online survey, during regular meetings or through a dedicated face-to-face review workshop.

In protracted emergencies, holding the learning phase in July-August allows recommendations to inform the HNO and HRP process as well as the review of the SOF in November/December.

**Convene a working group to lead the review and ensure that all WASH Cluster participants can contribute.**

- Identify participants to be in the working group, ensure that government authorities, local and international NGOs as well as UN agencies can participate
- Depending on the response context, consider how to include representation from both national and subnational cluster partners
- Consider the most appropriate communications channels to engage with WASH cluster implementing partners as well as donors, government

**Review and summarise good practice and lessons learned from the QAAS process, as well as from external evaluations, output from TWGs and operational research.**

- Identify sources of information, including: Quality Snapshots, Meeting minutes, TWG reports, cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM). Also consider what information is available outside the WASH Cluster: Recommendations from evaluations or support visits, findings from

operational research or specialist reports, assessment reports and analysis products.

- Collate and summarise key findings, recommendations and identify trends.
- Consider quality gaps that have been identified and the actions taken to address them, what is still to do?
- Review how the status of indicators have changed over the course of the review cycle. Consider how the context is likely to change over the course of the coming HPC and highlight the priorities for improving quality.
- Highlight information gaps and areas where the QAAS should be improved – is the analytical framework capable of identifying priority quality gaps?

**Present key recommendations and lessons to the WASH Cluster partners for comments and SAG validation.**

- Jointly agree changes that need to be made to the approaches, standards and indicators in the SOF.
- Review roles and responsibilities, the ToR and membership of Quality TWG and working arrangements between national and sub-national level.
- The SAG should validate the key recommendations and lessons from the review.

**Share the output of the learning review**

- Consider the most appropriate way to share the recommendations and lessons learned with key stakeholders. Storing summaries of recommendations online allows them to be easily referenced in the future.
- Where appropriate, consider how recommendations are fed back to the affected population.

## THE MODULAR ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

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**The Modular Analytical Framework for quality provides guidance on the specific standards, indicators and monitoring approaches to be used to track quality and accountability in WASH responses.**

The framework supports WASH Clusters to identify and apply broad range of principles and standards of quality to their specific context. It has been developed as a collection of modules that clusters can apply depending on the context, phase and strategic objectives. The framework should be made contextually appropriate by selecting modules and defining benchmarks that reflect national standards and the expectations of affected people.

### MODULE STRUCTURE

The framework proposes metrics that apply broadly to WASH responses, and that are in line with global humanitarian standards such as Sphere and the CHS as well as with the GWC [Needs Assessment Indicators & Question Bank](#). The Key Quality Indicators (KQI) do not aim to capture every factor that could be considered part of quality programming but rather to illustrate key trends and changes over time so that quality gaps can be identified and addressed. This information should be compared with and understood against other sources of information such as dialogue with affected communities, thematic studies, safety audits, assessments, feedback and complaints.

Each module focusses on a dimension of quality that is based on globally accepted standards and includes the following information:

#### **Standards:**

Each module includes references to globally recognised standards which link the indicators back to fundamental humanitarian principles. The standards are universal statements that apply to humanitarian response in any context, for example: *People have equitable and affordable access to a sufficient quantity of safe water to meet their drinking and domestic needs.*

#### **Key Quality Indicators (KQI):**

KQIs are measurable values that can be used to illustrate whether a standard is being met. KQIs are relative values that must be disaggregated and compared over time, between locations and between different affected groups. KQIs are calculated and presented in a regularly updated Quality Snapshot to inform the analysis of quality gaps and trigger corrective action. KQIs are written in a general form and should be contextualised by specifically defining key terms and providing benchmarks appropriate to the context.

Example: *% of affected population using a sufficient quantity of water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and personal hygiene*

## Benchmarks:

Benchmarks are points of reference that contextualise how the KQIs are understood. Different benchmarks may be needed for the different contexts within a response – e.g. for camp vs. urban, acute vs. stable contexts, secure vs. hard to reach etc. Guidance is provided in each module to support setting benchmarks.

Example: *The quantity of water that is considered 'sufficient' will differ from one context to another and so must be agreed jointly by the sector based on consultation with communities.*

## Monitoring approaches:

Each indicator may be measured in different ways depending on the access, and capacity available. Whilst during sudden onset or rapid escalation of crisis, the availability and granularity of information may not be sufficient to provide quantitative measures of the KQIs, rapid data collection methods such as KIs and observations can provide indications on the presence and severity of gaps. Suggestions are provided for both rapid and in-depth approaches to data collection, as well as for sources of information that can be used for triangulation.

## Data collection:

Specific questions for KIs and surveys are provided as well as observation points for field visits. Refer to the GWC [Needs Assessment Indicators & Question Bank](#) for guidance on question sets.

### SUDDEN ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION

QAAS should be put in place as soon as possible. In sudden onset or rapid escalation contexts, the wording of KQIs may be adapted to reflect the limited availability and reliability of data. For example, it may not be worthwhile to attempt to estimate *% of the affected population disposing of faeces safely every time they defecate* when information is being collected through ad-hoc observations and KIs. In this case a simple scoring system can be used to illustrate the likely severity of gap in a location or population group for each indicator. In a rapidly evolving context, a traffic-light or risk-level system can effectively present the information that is available in an operationally relevant way.

## QAAS & THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE

### SUDDEN ONSET EMERGENCIES

In sudden onset emergencies, or during a rapid escalation of an existing crisis, implementation and monitoring should start or increase as early as possible (see Figure 3). QAAS is initiated as soon as a coordination platform is set up, sharing of information about quality and accountability gaps, and joint corrective action can begin in a basic way prior to a SOF being defined.

Emphasis should be on promoting agile approaches to monitoring, analysis and improvement. The Define stage can be initiated in parallel with the strategic response planning element of the HPC. This enables the core aspects of quality to be re-affirmed at the beginning of the response. At this stage the SOF will be a lightweight document based on key globally agreed standards with contextualisation as is possible, supported by evidence from previous responses. Depending on the evolving context, it is likely that the SOF will need to be updated regularly as more information is available.

A Learning review should be carried out between 3-9 months after a sudden onset, depending on the context and trajectory of the HPC. At this point the SOF is reviewed and revised to be in line with the strategic objectives set out in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The learning review should also highlight the key gaps, successes and constraints faced during the acute emergency phase, and identify where action is needed to support an efficient transition to medium-term programming.

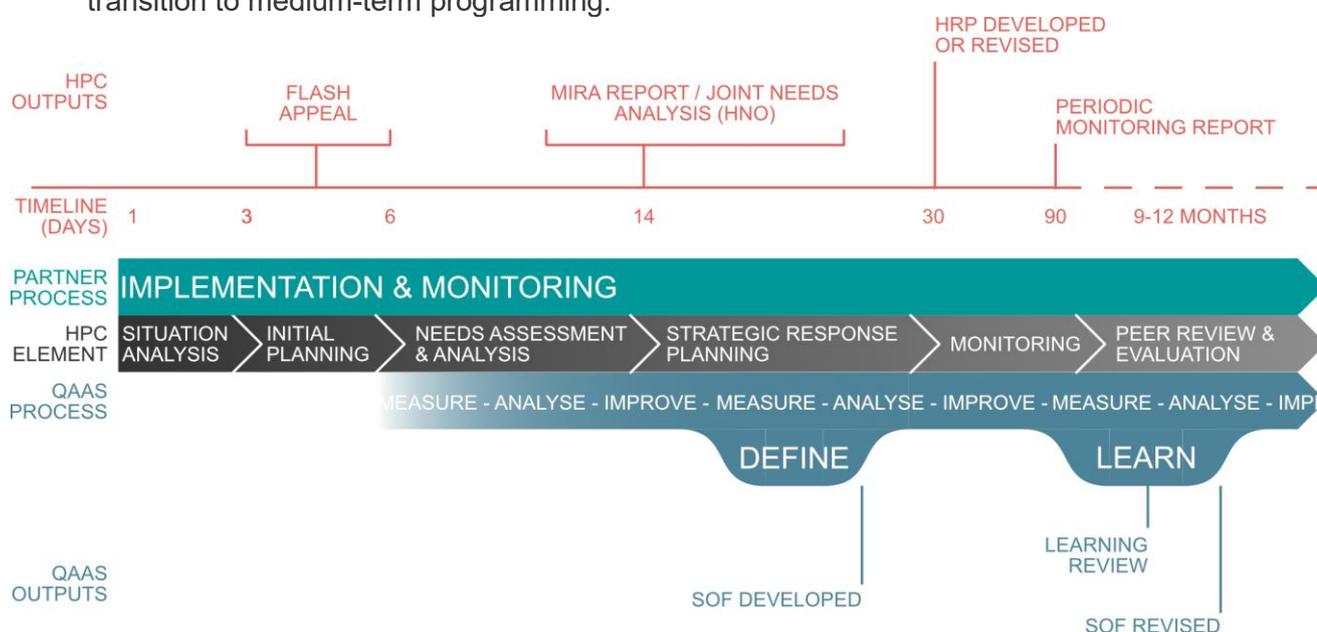


Figure 3: QAAS process in sudden onset emergencies

## PROTRACTED EMERGENCIES

In protracted emergencies working within an annual or multi-year HPC the QAAS is a continuous process aligned with Define and Learn stages aligned to the HPC (see Figure 4). Although learning reviews and changes to the SOF may be carried out at any time depending on needs, it is recommended that the Define stage is conducted shortly following the finalisation of the HRP and the Learn stage happens before the needs assessment and analysis element of the HPC. This timing is designed to allow WASH Clusters to carry out activities outside periods with significant workloads related to HPC processes while ensuring that the key outputs of the processes can benefit from, and feed into, relevant HPC processes. For example, the Define stage is carried out after the HRP is finalised so that the SOF can be based upon achieving the strategic objectives and priorities set out. The Learn stage is timed to allow a significant amount of programming to be reviewed, while also allowing learning to be used to influence the design of needs assessment and analysis approaches.

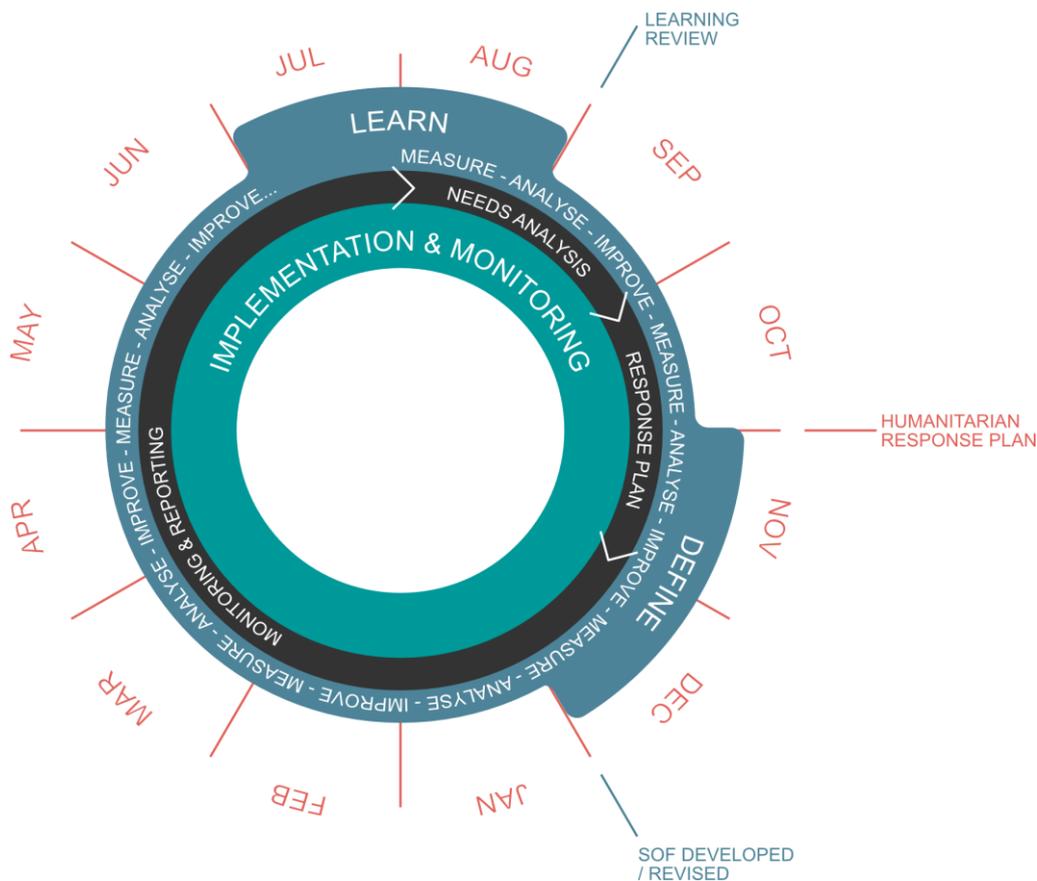


Figure 4: QAAS in protracted crises (annual / multi-year HRP)

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Quality Assurance is a collaborative process that includes the key stakeholders described below. The roles and responsibilities matrix on the following pages suggest who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed at each step of the process. This table should be adapted to context to consider the structure and working arrangements of each national cluster.

**Responsible:** Carries out the work to complete the step

**Accountable:** In charge of ensuring that the step is completed to an acceptable standard, that any prerequisites are in place and that those responsible understand and can complete the work

**Consulted:** Provides input and advice to guide the work

**Informed:** Receives updates about the status of a task or step either regularly or at completion

### **Affected Population (AP):**

People that have been affected by crisis are the primary constituents of humanitarian aid and they should be meaningfully engaged in processes that affect them. Their views should be sought as part of the monitoring process through interviews, surveys and participatory methods and reports should be made available to them in an accessible way. Proposed action plans should be discussed with affected communities. The affected population is not homogeneous group. Different people have different needs, face different barriers and have different vulnerabilities to various risks. They also have different capacities and coping strategies that help them overcome crisis. These differences are commonly expressed across dimensions of sex, age and disability (SAD), but factors such as social, health or legal status, ethnic or religious background and sexual orientation will be important in different contexts.

### **National government authorities (Government)**

National governments have a primary role to provide timely assistance and ensure the protection of those affected by crisis. Government authorities, through appropriate departments or line ministries, should lead humanitarian WASH coordination platforms where possible.

### **WASH Cluster/Sector Members (Partners):**

National and International organisations implementing programmes as part of the WASH response who have chosen to participate in the Cluster/Sector approach in a given context.

### **WASH Cluster/Sector Coordinator (WCC):**

The designated representative of the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) responsible for coordinating the WASH response, may be supported by deputy coordinators, co-coordinators and counterparts at the sub-national level.



**WASH Cluster/Sector Coordination Unit (WCCU):**

The WASH Cluster/Sector team hosted by the CLA, comprising of coordinators, information management staff and other specialists operating at both national and sub-national levels.

**Technical Working Group (TWG):**

A group of thematic specialists formed under a specific Terms of Reference to work on a specific set of tasks or project on behalf of the wider WASH Cluster.

**WASH Cluster/Sector Strategic Advisory Group (SAG):**

A group of senior WASH Specialists elected from the WASH Cluster/Sector Membership to jointly take strategic decisions on behalf of the overall WASH Cluster/Sector. Chaired by the WASH Cluster/Sector Coordinator.

**Inter-Cluster/Sector Coordination Group (ICCG/ISCG):**

The group of Cluster/Sector Coordinators chaired by OCHA, representing all active clusters/sectors in the response

**Third Party Monitors (TPM):**

Organisations contracted to conduct assessments or response monitoring on behalf of the humanitarian response. TPM may have terms of reference determined by a single agency or shaped with input from clusters/sector.



	<b>STEP</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABLE</b>	<b>CONSULTED</b>	<b>INFORMED</b>
<b>DEFINE</b>	<p>Agree on operational approaches, minimum standards and indicators for the response</p> <p>Output: Contextualised modular analytical framework based on the revised SOF</p>	<p>TWG proposes draft or revisions to existing document</p> <p>SAG endorses contextualised modular analytical framework and SOF</p>	<p>WCC / CLA at national and sub-national level</p>	<p>All WASH partners have the opportunity to review before endorsement</p> <p>Key external stakeholders with specialist thematic experience. The AP is represented through prioritisation of information from community consultations whilst developing the SOF.</p> <p>National government consulted to ensure definition is compatible with national standards.</p>	<p>ICCG / ISCG</p> <p>Donors</p> <p>SOF publicly available once endorsed</p>
<b>MEASURE</b>	<p>Collect data from the field as agreed and report to the WCCU</p> <p>Output: Monitoring Database</p>	<p>Partners collect data through routine programme monitoring</p> <p>TPM collect data as part of regular or ad-hoc assessments</p>	<p>Partners are accountable for the quality of data collected from their own programmes</p> <p>Contracting organisations are accountable for the quality of data from TPM</p>	<p>The AP contributes to monitoring data through perception monitoring and information from community consultation.</p>	
	<p>Compilation, validation and initial analysis to produce the quality snapshot</p> <p>Output: Quality Snapshot</p>	<p>Data is submitted to WCCU for compilation and initial analysis to create the quality snapshot</p> <p>WCCU is responsible for validating the data submitted through field visits and triangulation with other sources</p>	<p>WCC/CLA is accountable for the quality and accuracy of the quality snapshot</p>	<p>Key external stakeholders with specialist thematic experience feed into snapshot, providing relevant contextual information to support analysis.</p> <p>The AP is represented by partners</p>	<p>Quality Snapshot publicly available</p> <p>Specifically shared with ICCG / ISCG, Donors</p>



	STEP	RESPONSIBLE	ACCOUNTABLE	CONSULTED	INFORMED
ANALYSE	<p>Jointly analyse information in the quality snapshot, identify key quality issues and develop action plans to address them</p> <p>Output: Action plans</p>	<p>TWG identifies key data gaps, trends and quality issues from the Quality Snapshot (national level)</p> <p>Partners jointly review priorities and develop immediate action plans at sub-national level</p> <p>TWG proposes strategic action plan to be adopted by WCCU / SAG</p>	<p>WCC/CLA at national and sub-national level</p> <p>SAG may endorse action plans (especially strategic / national level plans)</p>	<p>Key external stakeholders with specialist thematic experience may contribute to the analysis of data gaps, trends and quality issues prioritisation</p> <p>External stakeholders may also support with action planning if multi-sectoral actions are required</p> <p>The AP is consulted on the priorities identified in the action plans.</p>	<p>Action plans are publicly available once validated</p> <p>Specifically shared with ICCG and Donors</p>
IMPROVE	<p>Action plans are implemented as agreed by each responsible partner / group</p> <p>Output: Improvements / Corrective actions and feedback to the affected population</p>	<p>Partners are responsible for implementing improvements to their programmes, with external support as agreed</p>	<p>Responsible partner senior management in country</p>	<p>TWG is consulted when challenges / barriers are faced in implementing action plans</p> <p>Progress is standing agenda point at WC meetings</p> <p>Progress is fed back to the AP as part of partner community engagement.</p>	<p>WCCU is informed of any significant changes to plans</p>
LEARN	<p>Revise operational approaches, minimum standards and indicators for the response based on lessons learned and changes to context</p> <p>Output: Revision of SOF and modular analytical framework</p>	<p>TWG proposes draft or revisions to existing document</p> <p>SAG endorses reviewed SOF</p>	<p>WCC / CLA at national and sub-national level</p>	<p>All partners have the opportunity to review before endorsement</p> <p>Key external stakeholders with specialist thematic experience</p>	<p>ICCG/ISCG</p> <p>Donors</p> <p>SOF publicly available once endorsed</p>

## GLOSSARY

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**Quality:**

Quality is a broad term that can include many different aspects of performance. In this document, we consider quality in terms of humanitarian assistance and use the following criteria to characterise a quality response:

- The response is effective at achieving objectives (providing access to WASH services and mitigating public health risks)
- The response provides assistance that meets agreed standards (e.g. Sphere, CHS, National Standards)
- The affected population are satisfied that the response meets their priority needs in an appropriate and timely way
- The response avoids doing harm and promotes the safety of the affected population and others engaging with the response

Quality can be applied to all aspects of a humanitarian programme cycle, throughout the assessment, design, implementation and evaluation phases and includes all factors that impact the ability for the response to meet the criteria above. Managing the level of quality in a response involves addressing all these factors in a systematic way and making collective decisions about balancing these different criteria.

**Accountability to the Affected Population:**

Accountability is the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power<sup>3</sup>. Accountability in humanitarian response involves ensuring, and demonstrating, that power is used responsibly for the benefit of those for whom assistance is intended.

Accountability can face different stakeholders, and requires that organisations give account to, take account of and are held to account by people affected by crisis, as well as those providing resources.

**Quality Assurance:**

An aspect of Quality Management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. The objective of QA is to prevent defects before they occur and to support continual improvement of organisational processes. The confidence provided by quality assurance is twofold – internally to management, and externally to customers, government agencies, regulators, certifiers, and third parties, and so QA is closely tied to the concept of accountability. Quality Assurance includes "all the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system that can be demonstrated to provide confidence that a product or service will fulfil requirements for quality".

**Quality Gap:**

Quality gaps describe instances where a response is failing to meet agreed standards for quality and accountability

**Immediate cause:**

The most direct action or situation that results in a quality gap.

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<sup>3</sup> CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators

**Root cause:**

A systemic, core issue that sets in motion a causal chain that results in a quality gap.

**Corrective action:**

An action or change that is intended to rectify a quality gap after it has been identified.

**Effectiveness:**

The extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. The effectiveness of humanitarian response is a responsibility that is shared between responders and outcomes should be assessed in conjunction with crisis-affected communities.

**Efficiency:**

The extent to which the outputs of humanitarian programmes, both qualitative and quantitative, are achieved as a result of inputs.

**Feedback mechanism:**

A formal system established and used to allow recipients of humanitarian action (and in some cases, other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience with a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action to improve some element of the response.

**Partners:**

Organisations working jointly within a formal arrangement to achieve a specific goal, with clear and agreed roles and responsibilities. In this document, Partners or WASH Partners refers to organisations that participate in the National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platform

**Participation:**

Involves enabling crisis-affected people to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them. It is achieved through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and worst affected are represented and have influence.

**Vulnerability:**

The extent to which some people may be disproportionately affected by the disruption of their physical environment and social support mechanisms following disaster or conflict, resulting in an increased risk of exploitation, illness or death. Vulnerability is specific to each person and each situation.