

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

High quality WASH responses are critical to saving lives, preventing harm and supporting a life with dignity. The humanitarian community invests significant resources in providing assistance that is not only technically effective, but in line with fundamental humanitarian principles.

However, **evaluations repeatedly highlight reoccurring technical issues, and it is common to hear from those affected by crisis that aid does not meet their priority needs in a safe and dignified way.**



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'QUALITY'?

Quality is a broad term that covers many different aspects of performance and is relevant to all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle.

The AQA Initiative uses the following criteria to characterise a quality humanitarian response:



ACHIEVES OBJECTIVES. The response is effective at achieving objectives.



AVOIDS DOING HARM. The response avoids doing harm and promotes the safety of people affected by crisis and others engaging with the response.



SATISFIES THE COMMUNITY. People affected by crisis are satisfied that the response meets their priority needs in an appropriate and timely way.



There is no absolute level of quality. Minimum standards for quality must be adapted to fit the context and agreed collectively between partners, based on consultation with those affected.

WHY?

- Existing monitoring and evaluation approaches are limited. **Whilst they collect a lot of data, they focus on tracking activities rather than understanding what is working for whom.**
- Reporting requirements are often prioritised, using vanity metrics that evidence our strengths but **fail to address our weaknesses.**
- Opportunities for improvement are being missed, resulting in **programmes that are falling short in terms of quality.**

Response metrics should balance our accountability to both donors and those affected by crisis.

VANITY METRICS VS ACTIONABLE METRICS

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Data collection and analysis are time consuming; we must prioritise metrics that can help us make better decisions. Most of the data currently available highlights achievements but doesn't show the whole picture.

VANITY METRICS:	ACTIONABLE METRICS:
Headline numbers that focus on activities completed , but do not capture information that indicates where we need to improve.	Information that can be used to understand whether activities are working and leads to specific improvements .
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Number of people reached▶ Number of latrines built▶ Number of hygiene kits supplied▶ Number of WASH committees established	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ % of people accessing safe water⚙ % of people using latrines⚙ % of people satisfied with the kits⚙ % of WASH committees with women in leadership positions

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- Humanitarian crises are complex and chaotic – **we need to collectively set clear standards for quality and hold ourselves accountable.**
- We must engage with those we seek to help, to understand our work from their perspective, **measuring ourselves against their expectations and adapting our programmes accordingly.**
- We need metrics that show where to improve so **that course corrections can be made in time to be effective.**

Monitoring what matters will lead to programmes that have more meaningful impact.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE

Delivering high-quality programmes that fulfil our commitment to be accountable to those affected by crisis requires a change in the way we collectively monitor and manage humanitarian responses. The AQA Initiative aims to equip the WASH sector with the tools and approaches required to focus on what is important, to continuously adapt to changing circumstances, and ultimately **remodel monitoring systems to start measuring what matters.**

WHO IS THIS FOR?

The tools are designed to be used routinely and collectively at the national coordination level, with a focus on small, achievable actions.

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL COORDINATION PLATFORMS:

While partners are responsible for delivering their own programmes and should have adequate systems in place for ensuring quality and accountability, national coordination platforms play an important role in enabling a collective and mutually accountable approach to humanitarian assistance.



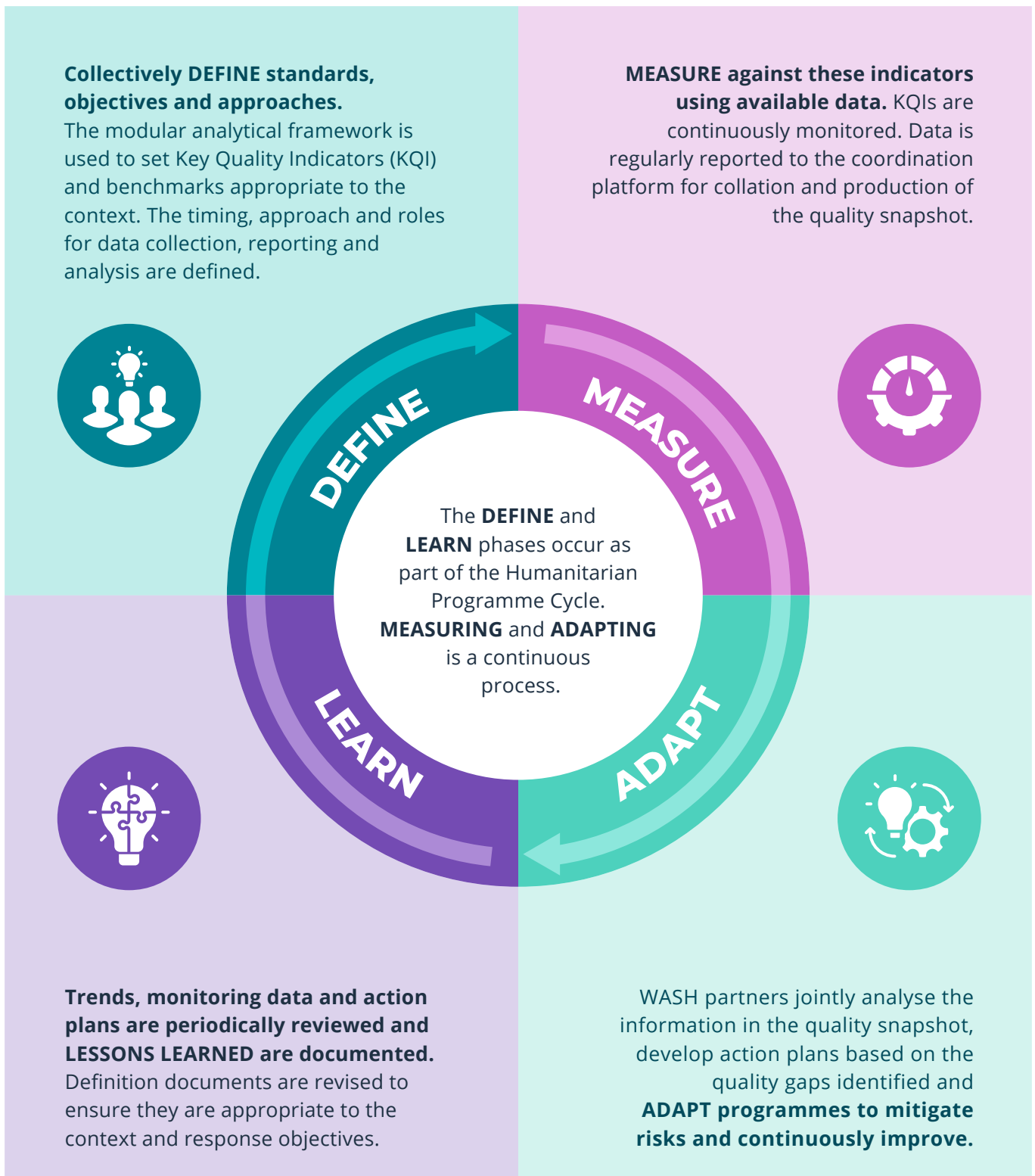
Different stakeholders play specific roles, but effective quality assurance and accountability is the joint responsibility of all partners.

THE AQA APPROACH

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO EMPOWER PARTNERS WITH THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO DELIVER HIGH QUALITY RESPONSES BY MEASURING WHAT MATTERS, WHILST EMPHASISING THE VOICES OF THOSE AFFECTED BY CRISIS.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

The process can be implemented by following four key steps – these are summarised below and outlined in further detail at [page 9 of the guidance note](#).



WHAT ARE THE TOOLS?

GUIDANCE NOTE is a step-by-step process followed by coordination platforms to collectively implement the AQA approach.

MODULAR ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK is a flexible tool that provides WASH standards, indicators and monitoring approaches for WASH partners looking to prioritise the monitoring of quality. It is composed of various modules, to be selected and adapted based on the priorities agreed by partners.

[VIEW THE GUIDANCE NOTE >](#)

[VIEW THE FRAMEWORK >](#)

EACH MODULE IS BASED ON THREE DIMENSIONS:

-  Process of implementation
-  WASH outcomes
-  User satisfaction

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ARE YOU COORDINATING?

WHO: WASH sector / cluster coordinators, co-leads and information managers.

As a WASH sector coordinator, your role is to facilitate the AQA process, build consensus among partners and share actionable information.

ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING?

WHO: National and international organisations implementing programmes as part of the WASH response.

As a WASH partner, your role is to contribute to the process, making sure that it is appropriate to the context and that the programmes you manage comply with the standards agreed.

ARE YOU MONITORING?

WHO: Assessment and MEAL specialists, and third party monitors.

Your role is to ensure that assessment and monitoring efforts adequately capture diversity, and that data reflects the ground truth and is shared responsibly. Where possible, monitoring systems should be designed to measure what matters in alignment with the collective AQA framework.

VIEW THE MATRIX >

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & FEEDBACK

It is the responsibility of all actors to ensure that information is repeatedly sourced from the community and their feedback is considered at every stage of the AQA process.



CONTACT US

For general enquiries, please contact: [The AQA Initiative](#)
For direct programme support, please contact: [GWC Helpdesk](#)
For further information: [Coordination Toolkit](#)

The AQA Initiative is supported by the **Global WASH Cluster**.