

# THE ACCOUNTABILITY & QUALITY ASSURANCE INITIATIVE

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## MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Guidance Note for WASH Coordination Platforms



**First published:** June 2020

**Revised:** February 2021

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This document has been developed on behalf of the WASH sector as part of the Accountability and Quality Assurance (AQA) Initiative, led by [Oxfam](#) and [Solidarités Internationales](#), in partnership with the [Global WASH Cluster](#).

The AQA initiative is funded by [UNICEF](#) and is supported by the [Global WASH Cluster's Technical Working Group on Quality Assurance](#) and is a priority initiative of the WASH sector's [Road Map 2020-2025](#).



# ACRONYMS

<b>AQA</b>	Accountability & Quality Assurance
<b>IMO</b>	Information Management Officer
<b>GWC</b>	Global WASH Cluster
<b>HNO</b>	Humanitarian Needs Overview
<b>HPC</b>	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning
<b>SAG</b>	Strategic Advisory Group
<b>SOF</b>	Strategic Operational Framework
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene



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## 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.

### 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.**



**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.

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

### 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

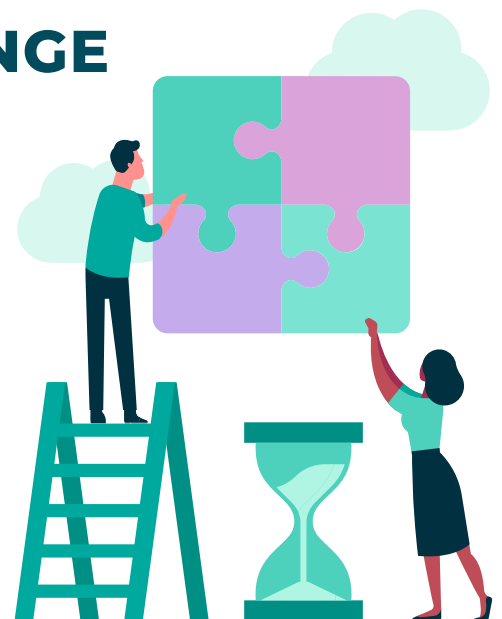
Delivering high-quality programmes that fulfil our commitment to be accountable to those affected by crisis requires a change in the way we collectively monitor and manage humanitarian responses. The AQA Initiative aims to equip the WASH sector with the tools and approaches required to focus on what 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.



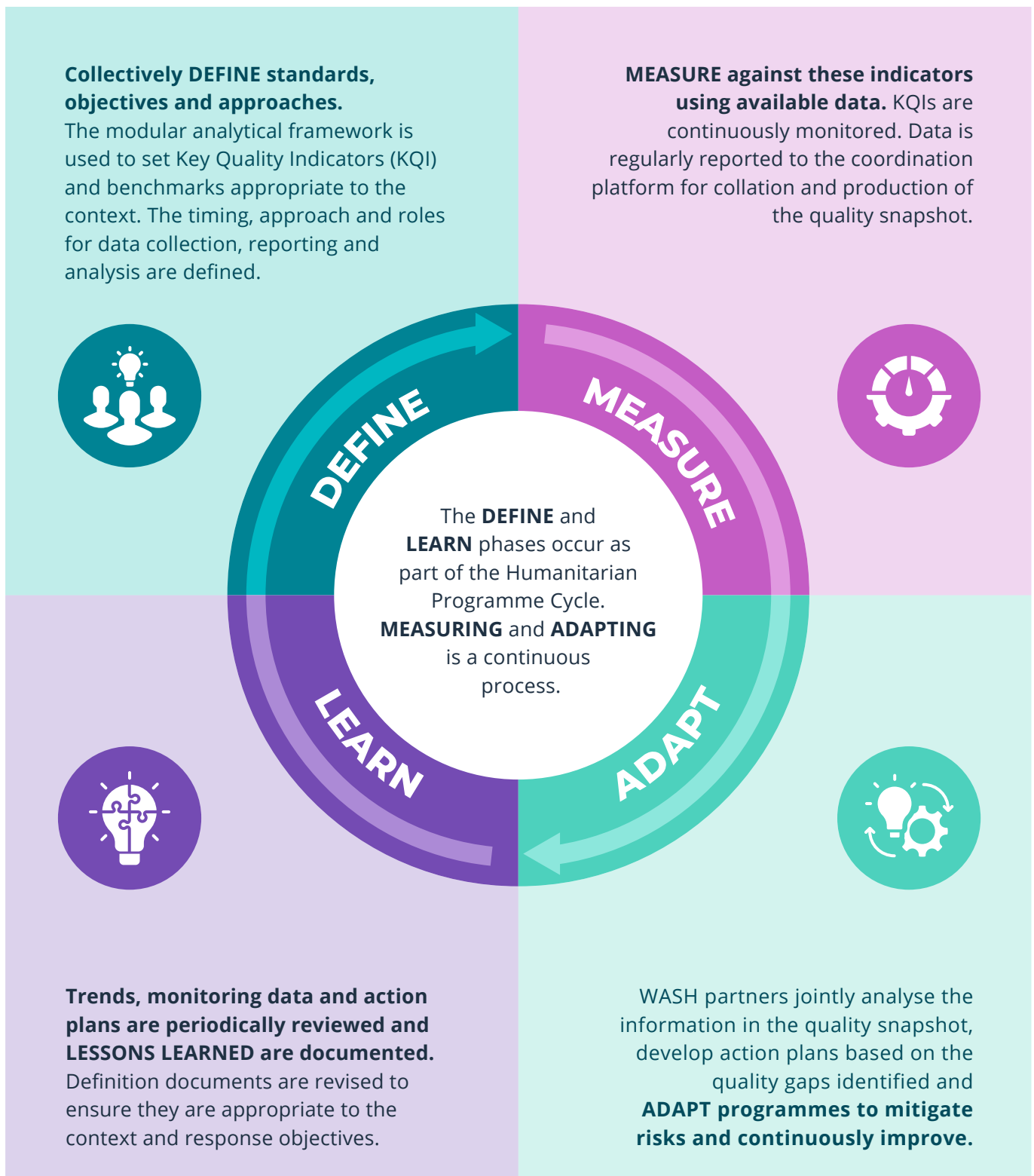
**Different stakeholders play specific roles, but effective quality assurance and accountability is the joint responsibility of all partners.**

# 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

[VIEW THE MATRIX >](#)

### 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.

## 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](#).



# **THE AQA PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP**



# 1

## DEFINE

Collectively **DEFINE** standards, objectives and approaches. The Modular Analytical Framework is used to set Key Quality Indicators (KQIs) and benchmarks appropriate to the context. The timing, approach and roles for data collection, reporting and analysis are agreed.

This step forms the foundation of the rest of the AQA process and it is important that WASH partners contribute to, 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.

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



### OUTPUT

Collectively agreed definition of quality standards, indicators and benchmarks used to monitor quality over time.

### WHEN

SUDDEN ONSET: Day 14 - 30

PROTRACTED: Annual revision after HRP finalised (November-December).

### WHO

TWG to draft or propose revisions and SAG endorses reviewed SOF.

## DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK (SOF)

The WASH SOF is a document that is developed collectively to define operational details about how the WASH response is planned, coordinated, implemented and monitored in order to achieve its strategic objectives. It provides the basis of the collective approach of the coordination system and creates the foundation for mutual accountability between partners. It also defines key standards for quality and accountability against which the response performance will be monitored.

While the SOF is not a formal requirement of the HPC, it is recommended as good practice for all WASH Coordination Platforms. Where a SOF has been developed, the contextualised Modular Analytical Framework developed during the DEFINE step should be included as set out in the [SOF guidance note](#).



## 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** ➔

### 1.1 CONVENE WORKING GROUP

- The working group should be comprised of technical experts that broadly reflect the Cluster membership (including government authorities, national and international NGOs, organisations representing marginalised groups – such as persons with disabilities, women’s groups, etc. – UN agencies and observers).

### 1.2 SELECT ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK MODULES

- Review the Cluster strategic objectives established 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.

### 1.3 FOR EACH MODULE, SET APPROPRIATE BENCHMARKS FOR EACH KQI

- Benchmarks should be set by referring to national government standards, international humanitarian standards and information from community engagement and feedback. For each indicator, agree approaches for data collection, reporting and analysis.

- Use the Modular Analytical Framework as a basis for deciding which data is to be reported to the Cluster. Limit the requirements for partner reporting to data that is useful for analysis and decision-making at the Cluster level.

- Ensure that data will be disaggregated by age, disability and gender.

- 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.

## EXAMPLE OF CONTEXTUALISED MODULE

COMPONENT	KEY QUALITY INDICATOR	BENCHMARKS	MONITORING
<p><b>WATER QUANTITY SPHERE 2018</b></p> <p>Water supply standard 2.1: Access and water quantity</p>	<p>% of affected population using a <b>sufficient quantity</b> of water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and personal hygiene</p>	<p><b>Sufficient Quantity:</b></p> <p>Managed camps with water networks: <b>20l/p/d</b></p> <p>Informal sites with water trucking: <b>10l/p/d</b></p>	<p>Daily delivery records to be cross-checked with monthly water user survey to verify quantities available at the household level.</p>
<p><b>WATER QUALITY SPHERE 2018</b></p> <p>Water supply standard 2.2: Water quality</p>	<p>% of affected population using water for drinking and cooking that is <b>acceptable quality</b></p>	<p><b>Acceptable quality:</b></p> <p>All managed supplied chlorinated to achieve: <b>0.2—0.5mg/l</b></p> <p>FRC at the tapstand and <b>&lt;5NTU</b></p>	<p>Each sector to be sampled for FRC at least 1 per day.</p> <p>Monthly testing of household-stored water.</p> <p>Water palatability questions included in water user surveys.</p>
<p><b>EXCRETA DISPOSAL SPHERE 2018</b></p> <p>Water supply standard 2.2: Water quality</p>	<p>% of affected population <b>disposing of their faeces safely</b> every time they defecate</p>	<p><b>Safe disposal:</b></p> <p>Household latrines located on premises: <b>Latrine passes functionality checklist</b></p> <p>Communal / shared: <b>Report always using a latrine to defecate + no evidence of OD</b></p>	<p>10% of household latrines per sector checked for functionality each month.</p> <p>Household survey records reported sanitation behaviours disaggregated by SAD</p> <p>Weekly open defecation (OD) observation in areas with communal latrines</p>
<p><b>HAND-WASHING SPHERE 2018</b></p> <p>Hygiene promotion standard 1.1: Hygiene promotion</p>	<p>% of affected population washing their hands with soap at <b>key times</b></p>	<p><b>Soap:</b></p> <p>Solid, liquid soap or ash</p> <p><b>Key times:</b></p> <p>Before eating, preparing food or feeding a child and after using the toilet or cleaning a child's bottom</p>	<p>Self reporting through household survey verified with observation of a place to wash hands in the home with water and soap available.</p>

The benchmarks and monitoring approaches shown are for illustration only. Each module must be contextualised to the operating environment.

# 2

## MEASURE



**Collect data as set out in the Modular Analytical Framework and produce regular Quality Snapshots to support further analysis.**

### DATA QUALITY & VALIDATION

- Validation of the data reported by partners to the Cluster 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.

### OUTPUT

Quality Snapshot

### WHEN

Continuously, with Quality Snapshot updated as agreed.

### WHO

Partners and third parties report up to date information to the WASH Cluster IMO for collation.

### CONTINUOUS MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

Measuring and adapting should occur continuously, with monitoring data being fed from partners and third-party monitors to the coordination platform to update the Quality Snapshot.

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 collectively, depending on the scope of the gap. Information about the gaps identified and corrective actions planned should be fed back to the affected population to make sure they agree.

[VIEW TIMING >](#)



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN  
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## 2.1 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 partners' reporting burden.
- The WASH Cluster IMO collates information from partner reporting and combines with information from other sources to form the Quality Snapshot.

## 2.2 REPORTED DATA IS COLLATED 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 and marginalised groups are an important touchstone for understanding how data should be interpreted.
- Alerts from community feedback and complaint mechanisms can be used to trigger additional field level spot checks, although care must be taken not to put individuals at risk of harm.

## 2.3 QUALITY SNAPSHOT IS SHARED WITH CLUSTER PARTNERS

- The IMO shares up to date information on all KQIs, 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 Cluster meetings in which the updated results are presented and discussed.
- Highlight where information gaps exist and note concerns about data quality.

## EXAMPLE OF QUALITY SNAPSHOT CHART

The chart shown in Figure 1 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.

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

## TOILET SAFETY PERCEPTION

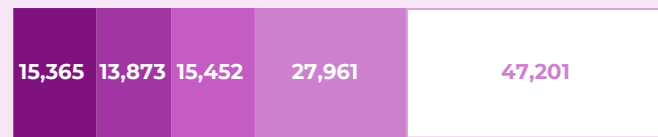
Indicates how many affected people are living in sites where children and women feel safe to go to the toilet at night and during the day.

Toilet safety scores are calculated based on the following proportions of women, girls, and boys who report feeling safe to use the toilet at night and during the day.

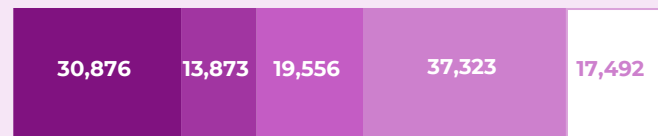
### AFFECTED POPULATION LIVING IN SITES BY SAFETY SCORE



#### QUARTER 1



#### QUARTER 2



## TOILET SAFETY PERCEPTION - DISAGGREGATED

Indicates the difference in safety perception around using a toilet between women, men, girls, and boys. Responses averaged across all sites.

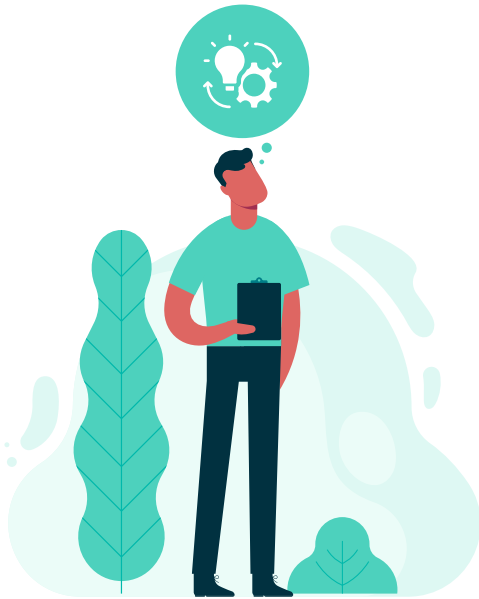
### AVERAGE % OF AFFECTED MEN, WOMEN, BOYS, AND GIRLS FEELING SAFE USING LATRINES AT NIGHT AND DURING THE DAY



Figure 1: Example excerpt from Quality Snapshot Myanmar

# 3

## ADAPT



### OUTPUT

Action plans, improvements to programmes and feedback to communities.

### WHEN

Continuously – analysis and action plans to be discussed during regular sector meetings.

### WHO

Joint analysis and improvements to be carried out by all partners. Input from thematic specialists where required.

WASH partners jointly analyse the information in the Quality Snapshot, develop action plans based on the quality gaps identified and adapt programmes to mitigate risks and continuously improve.

### 3.1 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.

### 3.2 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.

### 3.3 IMPLEMENT ACTION PLANS

- Each responsible partner implements the actions agreed as monitoring continues, with support from other stakeholders as required.





CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN  
ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION



- Information about issues identified and corrective actions taken is shared with appropriate stakeholders, including the affected community.
- Prioritise 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.

### 3.4 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 priorities.
- Wherever possible, communities should have a role in supporting corrective actions.

## 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.

## EXAMPLE OF ACTION PLAN

### ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE (IMMEDIATE ACTION)

ISSUE	PRIORITY	ACTIONS AGREED	BY WHO	BY WHEN
<b>What does the data show?</b>	<b>High Medium Low</b>	<b>Collect more information to understand the problem? Site visit? Alter a design? Feedback to the community?</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Low FRC in camp 3	High	Confirm chlorine dosing procedures with field staff	NGO A	Sep 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Lack of functional latrines in Camp 1	High	Field visit with desludging contractor	NGO C	Sep 29 <sup>th</sup>
Water consumption increasing in camp 5	Low	Repeat water user survey and follow up with focus group to understand more	NGO B	Oct 15 <sup>th</sup>
Very low satisfaction in camp 4 after last distribution round	Medium	Review post distribution monitoring and plan community meeting with camp committee	NGO D	Sep 29 <sup>th</sup>
Safety perceptions around the use of communal latrines at night	High	Review guidance on monitoring latrine repairs to specify increased frequency for plastic sheeting superstructures	Sanitation TWG	Oct 1 <sup>st</sup>

### ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE (REFERRAL)

ISSUE	PRIORITY	BARRIERS	ACTION	BY WHEN
<b>What does the data show?</b>	<b>High Medium Low</b>	<b>What is preventing action being taken?</b>	<b>What will be done to address the barrier?</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Low FRC in camp 3	High	Landowner has refused access to FSM sites in Camp 1 since June	WCC to raise issue of land access at ICCG	ICCG meeting Sep

# 4

## LEARN



**The LEARN stage is a periodic opportunity to take stock of lessons learned, to realign priorities and to identify and address course corrections on a longer timescale.**

The SOF and Modular Analytical Framework are updated to reflect changes to the context and improvements to methods and approaches, ensuring that these documents remain appropriate and relevant to the 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-focused working group, but should include input from all WASH Cluster participants.

Contributions can be sought through online surveys, 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.

### OUTPUT

Revised SOF and Modular Analytical Framework

### WHEN

SUDDEN ONSET: After 3-9 months

PROTRACTED: July-August / prior to HNO process or as agreed.

### WHO

All WASH partners, technical specialists and representatives from other clusters as appropriate.

#### 4.1 RE-ACTIVATE THE WORKING GROUP FROM THE DEFINE PHASE TO LEAD THE REVIEW

- Identify participants to be in the working group, and ensure that government authorities, local and international NGOs, organisations representing marginalised groups (such as persons with disabilities, women's groups, etc.) 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 partners as well as donors and government.

## REGULAR REVISIONS AND UPDATES

The SOF and Modular Analytical Framework should be living documents that are regularly revised and updated as new information or learning becomes available through assessments, analysis or the output of technical working groups. Provided information meets the inclusion criteria of being accurate, timely and representative of a consensus view, it may be added to the SOF and Modular Analytical Framework on an ongoing basis, with the approval of the Cluster partners.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUDDEN ONSET / RAPID ESCALATION



### 4.2 REVIEW AND SUMMARISE GOOD PRACTICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- Identify sources of information, including: Quality Snapshots, meeting minutes, TWG reports, cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM), recommendations from evaluations, etc. Also consider what information is available outside the WASH Cluster.
- Collate and summarise key findings, recommendations and identify trends.
- Consider quality gaps that have been identified and the actions taken to address them – what remains to be done?
- Review how the status of indicators has changed over the course of the review cycle. Determine 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 AQA process should be improved – is the Analytical Framework capable of identifying priority quality gaps?

### 4.3 PRESENT KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED TO WASH PARTNERS FOR COMMENTS AND SAG FOR VALIDATION

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

### 4.4 SHARE THE OUTPUT OF THE LEARNING REVIEW

- Consider the most appropriate way of sharing the recommendations and lessons learned with key stakeholders.
- Ensure that recommendations are fed back to the affected population.

# THE MODULAR ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



**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.**

**VIEW THE FRAMEWORK >**



## THE FRAMEWORK IS COMPOSED OF:

- 1.** Three base modules that can be applied to all contexts (Public Health Risk, WASH Service Provision, and People-Centred Programming), and
- 2.** Optional modules that can be selected according to the strategic objectives and priorities of the WASH Cluster.

These modules provide guidance on setting standards and benchmarks, in addition to monitoring indicators.

The framework is intended to be flexible and should be used to collect data that is relevant to the improvement of quality (both programmatic and technical) and accountability at the sector level. Moreover, it contains recommendations for integrating the perspective of people affected by crisis into the monitoring of quality, whilst evaluating accountability towards these people by monitoring inclusion, security, community participation and feedback.

## MODULE STRUCTURE

The framework proposes metrics that apply broadly to WASH responses, in alignment with global humanitarian standards such as Sphere and the CHS as well as with the [GWC Needs Assessment Indicators & Question Bank](#). The KQIs 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.

## EACH MODULE FOCUSES ON A DIFFERENT WASH INTERVENTION 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 a humanitarian response in any context.

*Example: People have equitable and affordable access to a sufficient quantity of safe water to meet their drinking and domestic needs.*

### KQIs

KQIs are measurable values that can be used to illustrate whether a standard is being met. KQIs are relative values that must be disaggregated by age, disability and gender 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 should be contextualised by specifically defining key terms.

*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 the setting of 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 and an understanding of what is feasible. In emergency, temporary or drought settings, 5l/p/d may be considered sufficient, whereas 15, 20 or 100 litres may be the minimum in other settings.*

### 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 a crisis, the availability and granularity of information may not be sufficient to provide quantitative measures of the KQIs, rapid data collection methods such as KIIs 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 KIIs 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

The AQA process 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 KIIs. 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.

## PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL ACTORS

In the case of a sudden onset or rapid escalation of a crisis, local and national organisations may be the only ones on the ground. Under normal circumstances, they have easier access and local knowledge that will be essential to the ongoing process of data collection, reporting and analysis.

- Understand the barriers to meaningful participation of local WASH partners and plan how to overcome them.
- Develop or strengthen mechanisms that enable local and national partners to participate in the entire AQA process, from the DEFINE to the LEARN step.
- Identify national and local WASH partners who can join the AQA technical working group to enable them to contribute to the discussions and decisions that will shape the AQA process.
- Local and national WASH partners may require additional support in terms of information and knowledge management capacity.
- Translate key documents into local languages or languages spoken by the majority of local WASH partners to ensure that they are included in discussions and decision-making processes.
- Prepare checklists for specific parts of the AQA process to guide local and national WASH partners.
- Train local and national partners in data collection, reporting, analysis and monitoring approaches.
- Support local WASH partners to improve the IT infrastructure to enable them to conduct digital surveys, undertake digital data collection and other related activities.





## PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING

- Aid agencies need to be aware of barriers that may prevent aid recipients from reporting abuse.
- They should develop sensitive reporting mechanisms with the local population to give victims and survivors, as well as their families and friends, a safe way to voice their concerns and complaints.
- Aid organisations must ensure that aid recipients are fully informed of their rights and know what is and is not acceptable behaviour on the part of aid workers.

Aid agencies need to recognise the extreme power imbalances that have characterised the sector and design their programmes in a way that empowers beneficiaries. Managers must instil in their organisations an open and inclusive culture that is actively anti-racist, where all staff are valued and where protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is integrated into daily activities.

## INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

It is important to ensure that people with disabilities, who are too often marginalised, are included throughout the AQA process, from the collection of qualitative information to the feedback of information:

- Data on marginalised groups (such as people with disabilities) may be limited, so it is essential to involve local communities and disabled people's organisations to verify/achieve data disaggregation.
- Stigmatisation of people with disabilities is an obstacle to their engagement. Ensure that disabled people's organisations are integrated and use awareness-raising approaches to combat stigma and discrimination.
- Information should be adapted and accessible to all. It is vital to therefore ensure that teams have basic skills to communicate with people with disabilities, through employing a sign language interpreter for instance.
- Ensure that feedback is given to all members of the community, including people with disabilities. Feedback should be provided in accessible formats.

# **THE AQA PROCESS & 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 2).

The AQA process is initiated as soon as a coordination platform is set up, so that information about quality and accountability gaps can be shared, 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 far as

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 within 9-12 months after a sudden onset, depending on the context and trajectory of the HPC. At this point the SOF is reviewed and revised to align with the strategic objectives set out in the 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.

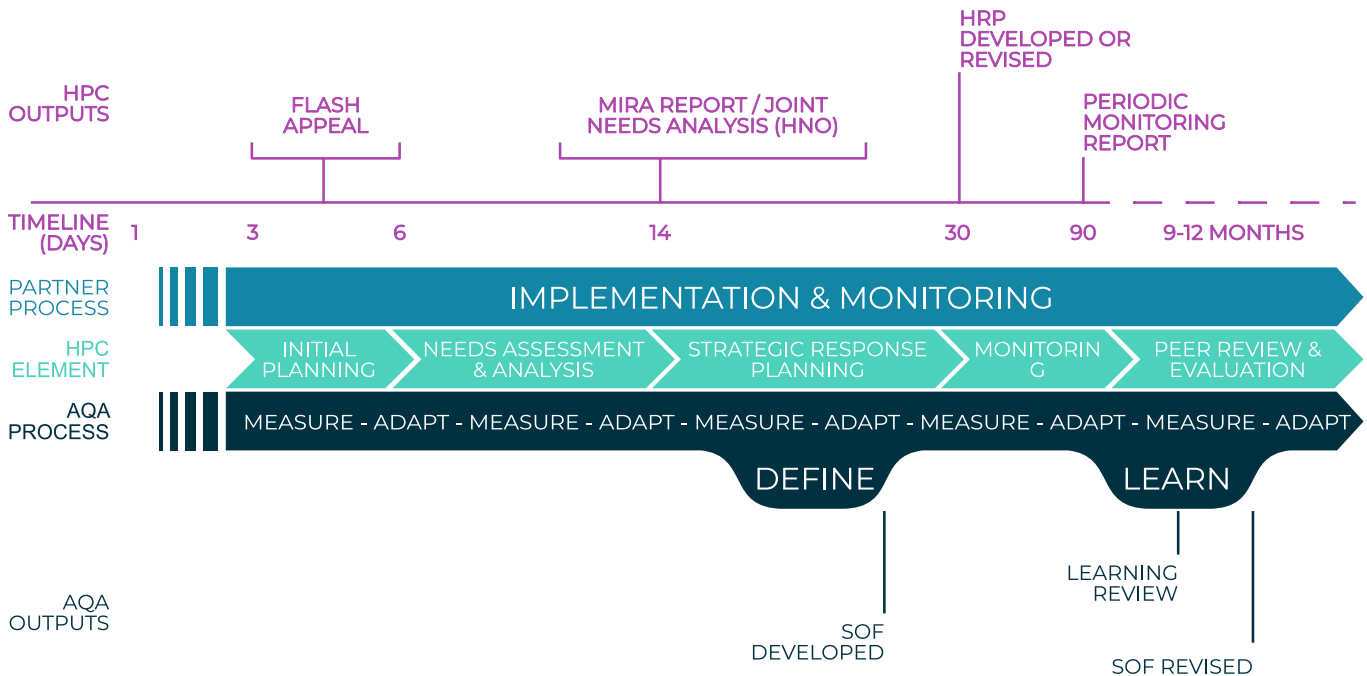
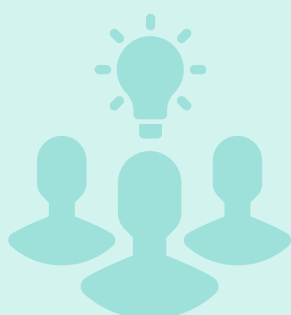


Figure 2

## DEFINE

In sudden onset emergencies, or during a rapid escalation of an existing crisis, a lightweight SOF should be developed based on the information available in the first 30 days of the response. Focus initially on the minimum quality standards and priority risks while securing buy-in from partners.

- 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.
- 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 likely to be most vulnerable (e.g. children, women, marginalised communities, older people and people with disabilities) 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.
- Review the SOF within 3 months based on the experience and information collected through quality monitoring.



## MEASURE



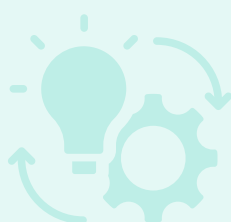
From an early stage, pro-actively seek out information on needs from key informants who can represent groups likely to be most at risk – for example women and girls, children and the elderly, those with disability – rather than attempting to collect statistics that can be generalised.

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.

## ADAPT



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 partners.

Use information about WASH quality gaps and barriers to addressing them to inform prioritisation at the inter-sector coordination level.

## LEARN



In sudden onset emergencies, or during a rapid escalation of an existing crisis, the SOF will be a lightweight document which will need to be regularly updated as the context evolves.

Plan to review and update the SOF within the first 9-12 months to ensure it is clear and appropriate to the operational context.

## PROTRACTED EMERGENCIES

In protracted emergencies, working within an annual or multi-year HPC, the AQA process is continuous, with both the DEFINE and LEARN stages aligned to the HPC (see Figure 3). 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. The LEARN stage should take place before the needs assessment and analysis element of the HPC. This timing is designed to enable key outputs to benefit from, and feed into, relevant HPC processes, whilst avoiding overload during periods in which workloads are significant.

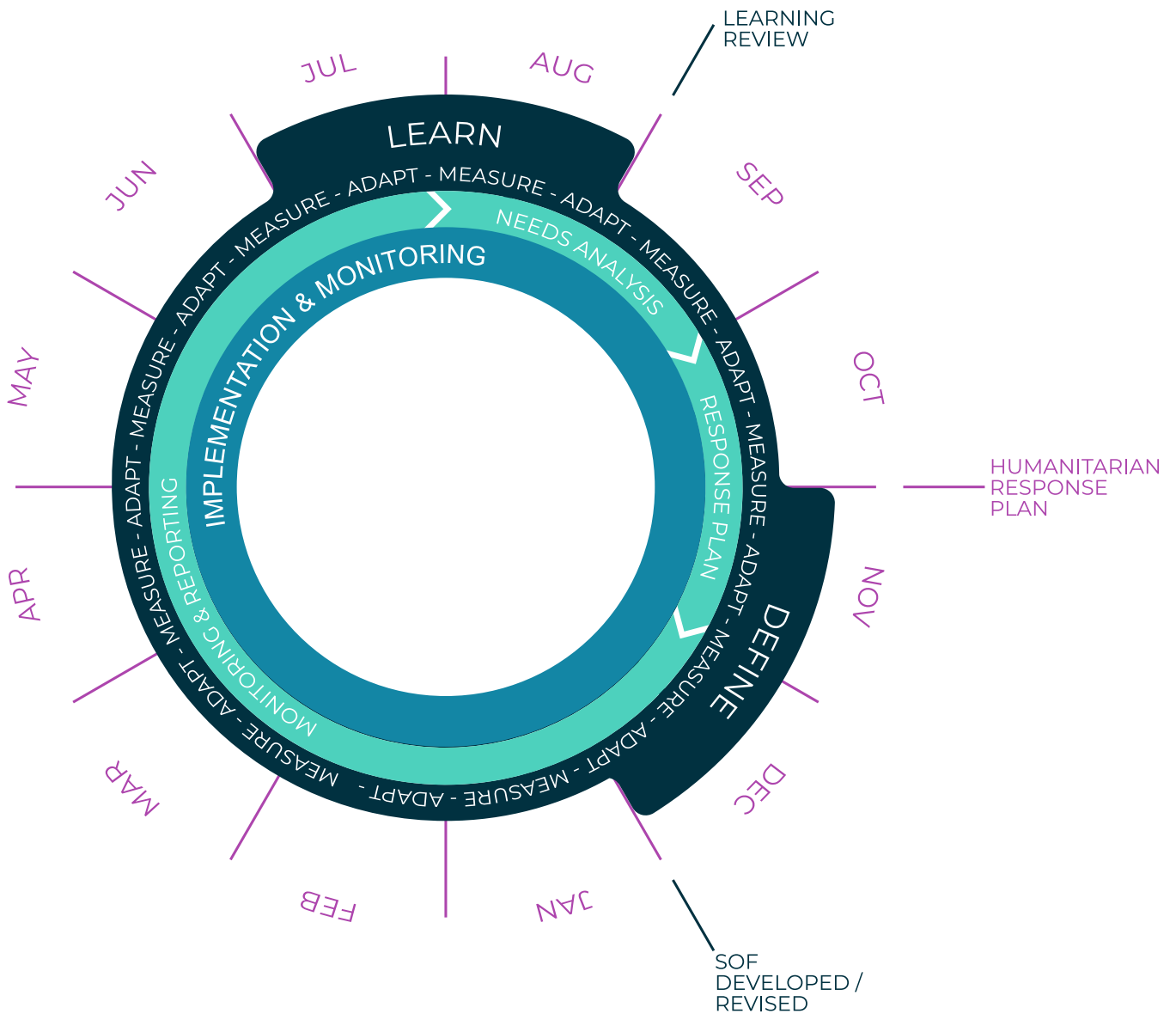


Figure 3

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Quality Assurance is a collaborative process that includes the key stakeholders described below. The roles and responsibilities matrix on page 34 indicates who is responsible at each step of the process. This table should be adapted to context to consider the structure and working arrangements of each national cluster.

## **AFFECTED POPULATION**

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 a 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**

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.



## **TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)**

A group of thematic specialists formed under a specific ToR 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.

## **THIRD PARTY MONITORS**

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

ARE YOU A WASH SECTOR COORDINATOR?	ARE YOU A WASH PARTNER?	DO YOU SPECIALISE IN MEAL?
<p><b>WASH Sector / cluster coordinators and co-leads.</b></p> <p>As a WASH Sector Coordinator, your role is to facilitate the AQA process, build consensus among partners and share actionable information.</p>	<p><b>National and international organisations implementing programmes as part of the WASH response.</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Assessment and MEAL specialists, and third party monitors.</b></p> <p>As someone who focuses on MEAL, your role is to make sure that your monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approaches can align with the collective AQA process, that data reflects the ground truth and is shared responsibly</p>
<p><b>DEFINE</b></p> <p><b>OUTPUT:</b> Contextualised Modular Analytical Framework</p>	<p>Facilitate collective agreement between partners on operational approaches, minimum standards and indicators that will be used to monitor the response.</p>	<p>Contribute your expertise and knowledge of the response to draft or update the collective Modular Analytical Framework.</p> <p>Ensure that WASH programmes are designed to align with the agreed Modular Analytical Framework and that donor proposals include provision for quality monitoring.</p> <p>Contribute your expertise to help define indicators and monitoring approaches.</p> <p>Ensure that monitoring teams collect the right information to share with the coordination platform (for example, collect data that is disaggregated by sex, age and disability)</p>
<p><b>MEASURE</b></p> <p><b>OUTPUT:</b> Monitoring Database &amp; Quality Snapshot</p>	<p>Set up (with the IMO) a reporting system that compiles data submitted by partners and allows a summary of indicators to be tracked and shared with partners in the form of a regular quality snapshot.</p> <p>Cross check information submitted through field visits and triangulation with other sources.</p> <p>Where third party monitoring or assessments are taking place, ensure that indicators and data collection align with those set out in the Modular Analytical Framework.</p>	<p>Ensure that your organisation reports good quality information to the coordination platform.</p> <p>Commit to data collection approaches that prioritise the perspectives of those affected by crisis.</p> <p>Support the timely sharing of good quality monitoring information with coordination platforms.</p> <p>Share relevant findings from community feedback and response mechanisms with the coordination platform.</p> <p>Ensure that sensitive data is appropriately anonymised before being shared.</p>
<p><b>ADAPT</b></p> <p><b>OUTPUT:</b> Action Plans</p>	<p>Ensure that review of the Quality Snapshot is a standing agenda item for coordination meetings.</p> <p>Document quality gaps identified by partners as well as action plans.</p> <p>Address systemic barriers to quality through advocacy efforts.</p>	<p>Jointly analyse information in the Quality Snapshot, identify key quality issues and develop action plans to address them.</p> <p>Discuss quality gaps and action plans with communities and respond to any specific issues raised.</p> <p>Wherever possible, communities should have a role in supporting corrective actions.</p> <p>Contribute your expertise to help analyse the Quality Snapshot and identify quality gaps.</p> <p>Feedback to the affected people with progress made.</p>
<p><b>LEARN</b></p> <p><b>OUTPUT:</b> Revised Modular Analytical Framework</p>	<p>Lead a learning review workshop with partners to identify and document changes needed in the Modular Analytical Framework.</p> <p>Share relevant findings with the inter-sector coordination group, donors and the global cluster.</p>	<p>Participate in the learning review process and contribute to the Modular Analytical Framework revision.</p> <p>Contribute to the learning review and to the Modular Analytical Framework revision.</p>

# GLOSSARY



## **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>1</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.

## **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 a 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.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Involves enabling people affected by crisis 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.

## **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 WASH Coordination Platform.

<sup>1</sup> CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators

## **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 criteria outlined at page 5 to characterise a quality 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.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

An aspect of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. The objective of quality assurance 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 quality assurance is closely tied to the concept of accountability. The term 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.

## **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.

