WASH CLUSTER:
DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK (SOF)

- In an inter-dependent humanitarian world, strategic approaches allow multiple agencies with diverse mandates to achieve goals collectively that could not be achieved by individual approaches alone. Clusters are the expression of that collective realization and aim to provide the "enabling environment" that allows diversity to strengthen both the effectiveness and efficiency of aid delivery.

- A strategic operational framework (SOF) does more than outline the WASH Cluster's *strategic* orientation: it goes into more detail about *operational* ways of working. As a *framework*, it is also flexible enough to allow Cluster partners to develop their own approaches according to their own mandates, capabilities, capacities, and comparative advantages.

- For maximum legitimacy, the SOF should be drafted and revised by a small team representing all stakeholder groups (see Terms of Reference for the Strategic Advisory Group - SAG).

- Note that outputs of 'Technical Working Groups' (TWIGs) will take time to formulate, and should be appended to the SOF as and when approved by the SAG.

- The following is a checklist of processes to be considered when formulating and adopting the SOF:

PROCESS	CONSIDERATIONS
1. Convene SAG	• Having first requested the Cluster to agree this approach. • Include Government and/or Local Authorities as soon as possible (but note that this is not always possible, especially in the early days)
2. Obtain 'agency profiles' from Cluster members	• This will provide a rapid overview of stakeholder capacities and initial response gaps (pending more comprehensive capacity and who,what,where,when mapping after Week 1)
3. Circulate first draft to all stakeholders	• Within 24 hrs of first SAG drafting meeting (no later than Day 4).
4. Incorporate comments from all stakeholders	• Allow 24 hr turn-round for each re-draft.
5. Penultimate draft	• Discuss with Government and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (OCHA). • No later than end of Day 7.
6. Obtain formal (written) Government endorsement	• This may require a separate Memorandum of Understanding (in which case, involve the Humanitarian Coordinator). Since this may take some days, allow the Cluster to adopt the strategy as an interim measure.
7. Formally review the framework (at least monthly) in light of evolving needs	• In natural disaster response settings, it is expected that the strategy be re-visited every month to ensure that it remains relevant to evolving needs on the ground.

- The following is a checklist of strategic areas to be considered when formulating and adopting the SOF. A statement under each of these strategic areas should be considered when drafting the SOF document (see examples from Myanmar and Bangladesh). Additional information and revised approaches may emerge as the emergency response evolves and the SOF should be updated regularly to reflect this.

SECTION	KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Introduction / Contextual Analysis	**1a) WASH Contextual Analysis - External**
	☐ Brief overview of key relevant WASH national policy documents.
	☐ Brief overview of role of key WASH related Ministries including contact information (e.g. Ministry of Water, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Mines and Geology, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Ministry of Public Works).
	☐ Short general description of pre disaster national WASH conditions (e.g. latest MICS data for water and sanitation coverage in urban and rural settings, general hydro geological context, rainfall data, plus data from any other pertinent national WASH related reports).
	☐ Description of the location and status of disaster affected population (if available). Impact of disaster (if available) against pre-disaster baselines:
	  - Access to safe water.
	  - Access to improved sanitation.
	  - Prevalence of diarrhoeal and vector borne diseases.
	  - Crude and under 5 mortality rates.
	☐ Description of priority WASH needs (human, financial, material).
	
	1b) WASH Contextual Analysis – Internal (i.e. WASH Cluster)
	☐ Overview of current WASH Cluster stakeholders and their available **and anticipated** WASH related resources (WASH skilled and semi-skilled personnel, WASH materials and equipment, and funding).
	☐ Current status with respect to who's doing what, where, when (4W). Analysis of 4W versus needs (gap analysis).
	☐ Overview of available **and anticipated** WASH funding by donor.

2. Guiding Principles	**2a) WASH Cluster Coordination** ☐ Overview of the modalities of operation of the WASH Cluster including the role and function of the WASH SAG, and WASH TWGs. Statement suggesting that partners, including donors and government bodies, try to adhere to the spirit of the strategic operational framework, where possible, which may include items such as adequate representation at meetings and timely involvement in group decision making and sharing of programmatic information and technical expertise. ☐ A statement describing the agreed modalities of prioritization for the allocation of resources allocated via the Cluster mechanism (funds and WASH materials) according to agreed vulnerability criteria, and according to capacities and presence of WASH Cluster partners. ☐ A statement describing the nature of the WASH Cluster coordination linkages with other relevant Clusters as appropriate, especially Health (e.g. ensuring that the WASH Cluster partners form a part of a comprehensive approach to preventative health, and geographic morbidity and mortality data is shared), Education (e.g. ensuring water, sanitation and hygiene promotion interventions are ongoing in emergency school programs) and Emergency Shelter (e.g. ensuring that shelter interventions are not being provided without WASH service provision). **2b) WASH Information Management** ☐ Overview of the planned role of the WASH Information Manager and the WASH Cluster's commitment to providing WASH partners with timely data that includes geo-statistical mapping of WASH related information (e.g. vulnerability; water scarcity; damage; population density; disaster event; hazard mapping; hydro-geological ground water mapping; designs of water and sewage systems in urban areas and trend analysis). ☐ A reminder of the need for timely programmatic data from partners. **2c) WASH Standards** ☐ An overview of the WASH standards that Cluster partners agree should be adhered to including national Government/WHO water quality standards, WASH technical guidelines produced by WASH TWGs and humanitarian sector standards in particularly the Sphere Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2004; Chapter 4: Minimum Standards in Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (www.sphereproject.org).

	2d) Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Recovery ☐ A statement of the WASH Cluster's aim to ensure that disaster risk reduction and mitigation are integrated into the emergency response and that WASH interventions achieve early integration with early recovery frameworks. Agreement on 'build back better 'and 'greener' using 'improved' technologies. **2e) Participation and Equity** ☐ A summary concerning the WASH Cluster's agreement on humanitarian principles with respect to equity to WASH services across all social and vulnerable groups (that WASH assistance is based on independent assessment of need and prioritized based on vulnerability, community resilience, number of child and female headed households, hazard risk, and numbers of households affected). ☐ A statement concerning the WASH Cluster's position on ensuring participation of affected communities in any decisions that may affect their future, and establishing beneficiary feedback mechanisms including complaints mechanisms. **2f) Coordination and Capacity Building** ☐ A short paragraph describing the modalities of WASH Cluster partner interaction, engagement and capacity building interventions with local Government authorities. ☐ A section describing how the WASH Cluster partners will ensure that cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed in particular with respect to gender (increased women's participation in decision-making processes and skills trainings in relation to the design, implementation, and operation of collective water supply, sanitation and hygiene projects), disability and age (in particular, access to WASH services designed for the disabled and elderly), and the environment (e.g. consensus on best practice for the disposal of water treatment waste products, the use and role of bottled water in the emergency response). **2g) WASH Coverage** ☐ A summary of the WASH Cluster's aims to ensure WASH interventions avoid partial coverage of needs in any single beneficiary community and form an integrated approach with elements of water quantity, water quality, sanitation and hygiene promotion.
3. Goal	☐ A statement agreed by members of the WASH Cluster on the goal of the WASH Cluster response for example.. *"The WASH Cluster partners aim to improve and maintain the health of the most vulnerable disaster affected populations by focusing their efforts on the efficient and timely implementation of water quantity, water quality, sanitation, disease vector control and hygiene promotion programmes."*
4. Sectoral Objectives	☐ A list of sectoral objectives agreed by WASH Cluster partners with respect to the provision of appropriate emergency water, sanitation vector control and hygiene services to affected populations in a timely and dignified way. ☐ Sectoral objectives should be SMART (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Applicable, Relevant, Prioritized, and Time-bound) using indicators of success which have been pre-agreed within and between Clusters against which to measure progress. ☐ Agree denominator figures of affected populations among all Clusters
5. Sub-Sectoral Strategies	**5a) Water Quantity** ☐ A short summary describing the WASH Cluster's approach to ensuring that disaster affected communities have sufficient water quantity during the emergency and recovery phases including strategies for schools and medical facilities. Include Cluster consensus with respect to engaging water user groups in planning and sustainability of operations and maintenance. Include a summary of the Cluster's thoughts concerning the most appropriate water sources and water supply technological choices for the emergency and early recovery periods (e.g. groundwater vs. surface water, the appropriateness of a response which considers sustainability in the recovery phase in technology choice e.g. solar/wind). NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed TWG report. **5b) Water Quality** ☐ A short summary describing the agreed WASH Cluster approach to ensuring that disaster affected communities have safe water (free from harmful chemical, physical and microbiological contaminants) to drink not just at the tap but at all

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	levels of the water chain up to the point of consumption. Include a summary of the Cluster's thoughts concerning the most appropriate technological choices for the emergency and early recovery periods (e.g. standardizing appropriate water treatment technology across partners, assessing the appropriateness of complex compact water treatment units in areas without trained personnel or spare parts, the effectiveness of distributing water purification tablets without promotion). Include consensus on water quality surveillance mechanisms and coordination with local water quality testing authorities. NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed TWG report.
	5c) Excreta Disposal
	☐ A short description of the agreed WASH Cluster approach to ensuring that prioritized disaster affected communities have access to sufficient coverage of excreta disposal services including adequate facilities at schools and clinics. Cluster consensus on the most effective and practical solutions for the immediate emergency and recovery phases including technological choice (e.g. defecation fields, shallow trench latrines, raised pit latrines, oil drum latrines, unimproved pit or pour flush) and approach (e.g. public latrines requiring cleaners, communal latrines every 4 families, family latrines). WASH Cluster consensus on culturally appropriate approaches to latrine promotion (e.g. mass media campaigns). NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed TWG report.
	5d) Hygiene Promotion
	☐ A short summary describing the agreed WASH Cluster approach to promoting improved hygiene practices. Include a summary of the Cluster's consensus on a small number of priority practices to be targeted and the key 'at risk' groups requiring promotion (e.g. women with children under 5, school children, teenage girls). Include WASH Cluster agreement on the most appropriate approaches to promotion (e.g. mass media campaigns in the emergency phase moving to more participative behavior change communication BCC programs in the recovery phase), coordination with local authorities to ensure consistent messaging in the emergency phase, and WASH Cluster consensus on the contents of culturally appropriate standardized hygiene kits. Consensus that all partners must include hygiene promotion in their ongoing water and sanitation programs. NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed TWG report.
	5e) Solid Waste Management and Recycling
	☐ A brief overview of the agreed WASH Cluster approach to ensuring that disaster affected communities have access to solid waste management services. Cluster consensus on the most effective and practical solutions for the immediate emergency and recovery phases including technological choice (e.g. collection and off-site disposal and recycling mechanisms that also address medical waste) and linkages to existing solid waste management mechanisms. NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed solid waste management TWG report.
	5f) Drainage
	☐ A short paragraph describing the agreed WASH Cluster approach to ensuring that disaster affected communities have adequate drainage and an environment free from the risk of standing water. NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed drainage TWG report.
	5g) Disease Vector Control
	☐ A brief overview of the agreed WASH Cluster approach to control of disease vectors (e.g. mosquitoes, flies, vermin, lice, ticks, fleas). Cluster consensus on context specific best practice in terms of equipment (e.g. spraying , fogging), chemicals (where necessary), methodologies and seasonal timing. Include clear guidance on linkages with the Health Cluster. NOTE: more detailed information may be provided in an annexed vector control TWG report.
6. List of Key Partnerships	☐ Government; Local Authorities; Public and Private Companies (e.g. utilities and other service providers); Military (internal & external).

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7. Indicators	☐ An agreed list of the 'core' WASH Cluster indicators (suggested 5-10 to avoid overburdening) to be tracked by every WASH Cluster partner implementing WASH programs. Suggestions include.. <table><tr><td>**Water Quantity:**</td><td>☐ Per capita water consumption (lit/person/day).</td></tr><tr><td>**Water Quality:**</td><td>☐ % water samples with 0 faecal coliforms /100ml ☐ 2-5 mg/litre of residual chlorine at point of use</td></tr><tr><td>**Excreta Disposal:**</td><td>☐ # people per latrine. ☐ % latrine slabs free from faeces.</td></tr><tr><td>**Hygiene:**</td><td>☐ % households who can produce a piece of (un-wrapped) soap within 1 minute. ☐ % households with storage capacity of at least 20 litres. ☐ % female household heads who can recall at least three critical times for handwashing.</td></tr></table>	
8. List of Key Inter-Sectoral Linkages	☐ As per inter-Cluster planning matrices attached, including Early Recovery components.	
9. List of Cross-Cutting Issues	☐ e.g. Gender & Diversity; HIV/AIDS; Environment; Governance; Livelihoods.	
10. List of Key Definitions	☐ e.g. Household; Sustainability; Improved Sanitation.	
11. Phasing	☐ A description of the WASH Cluster's timelines for transitioning between response phases. Consensus on timing of the transfer of responsibilities to local institutions, including Information Management unit. Consensus regarding preparedness capacity for renewed responses and their coordination.	
12. ANNEXES	☐ List of pertinent annexes including WASH TWG outputs planned or completed.	