

Introduction

UNHCR has the primary responsibility for coordinating, drafting, updating and promoting guidance related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in refugee settings. This WASH Manual has been prepared through a process of open collaboration and discussion in participation with UNHCR's WASH Officers, UNHCR's sister agencies, and experts and practitioners from the WASH community.

Structure of the WASH Manual

This WASH Manual has been organised around a series of WASH guidelines that should be met in all refugee settings (see [pages viii to xxiv](#)). More information for each guideline can be found by referring to the associated guidance notes in the relevant sections that form the main body of the document. The overall structure of the WASH manual is as follows:

- ◆ **Section 1** provides an overview of the purpose, scope and rationale for the UNHCR WASH Manual in addition to a short introduction to UNHCR's protection mandate, and the legal framework for the rights to water and sanitation.
- ◆ **Section 2** discusses the philosophies and principles behind UNHCR's WASH interventions in particularly: safety and security; a timely and adequate response; participation of stakeholders; universal access; child friendly facilities; value for money and cost effectiveness; appropriate technology selection; durable solutions; reinforcing the capacity of stakeholders; monitoring the effectiveness of WASH interventions; accountability to donors, beneficiaries and local authorities; protection of the environment; and contingency planning.
- ◆ **Section 3** focuses on the role of WASH interventions in prevention and control of communicable diseases, in addition to the importance of having a comprehensive and coordinated approach with health programming during outbreak responses.
- ◆ **Section 4** provides an overview of UNHCR's guidelines for water supply interventions with a focus on: water sources; water prospection and evaluation; water abstraction; water source protection; water quality monitoring and testing; bulk water treatment; household point of use water treatment; water storage; water distribution; and water safety plans.
- ◆ **Section 5** looks at the importance of excreta management in particular: excreta management technical options; operation, maintenance and management of wash infrastructure; household

toilets; and guidelines for construction quality.

- ◆ **Section 6** concentrates on the importance of solid waste management in refugee settings including: waste classification and management options; waste reduction; waste recycling; reuse of domestic wastes; and technical options for waste collection, storage, transportation and disposal.
- ◆ **Section 7** contains an introduction to UNHCR's guidelines for disease vector control with a focus on: common disease vectors; and environmental, chemical, and behavioural related prevention and control measures.
- ◆ **Section 8** presents an overview of UNHCR's guidelines for hygiene promotion interventions with a focus on: key hygiene messages; key hygiene activities; hygiene related non-food items; hygiene related surveys; approaches to hygiene promotion; and behaviour change programming.
- ◆ **Section 9** provides a general overview of how WASH programmes should be managed including: management of human resources; operation, maintenance of WASH infrastructure; health and safety; and staff personal protective equipment.
- ◆ **Section 10** introduces guidance for rapid and comprehensive WASH needs assessments including guidance for: household surveys; focus groups; key informant interviews; sanitary surveys; and infrastructure assessments.
- ◆ **Section 11** focuses on the UNHCR guidelines for monitoring

in refugee settings including a full description of core WASH indicators, their monitoring frequencies, and data collection methods.

- ◆ **Section 12** describes UNHCR's responsibilities to ensure timely and effective coordination of the WASH sector during refugee emergencies in collaboration with local authorities.
- ◆ **Section 13** provides a comprehensive set of references for refugee WASH interventions broken down by WASH thematic area.
- ◆ **Section 14** provides links to a comprehensive set of technical forms, drawings, checklists, and field tools for refugee WASH programmes.

Introduction

1. UNHCR, the United Nations refugee organization, is mandated by the 1951 convention of the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and other persons of concern.
2. This manual outlines the WASH guidelines that should be met in all refugee settings to provide an adequate standard of basic WASH services for refugees. This Manual does not strive to replace the multitude of excellent WASH technical resources that exist in the field. Instead, it aims to create a clear operational guidance for refugee situations that defines



WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW specific WASH interventions must be carried out - along with WHICH procedures must be used, and WHERE to find approved technical procedures, tools, methodologies and designs. Above all, it aims to set out a set of WASH guidelines that should be respected by all organisations in all refugee settings.

3. This manual focuses on practically all refugee situations, where UNHCR operates WASH programmes, in low-middle-income and high-income countries, emergencies, protracted situations, care and maintenance settings, and eventually repatriation or any other durable solution identified. The focus of the manual is on refugees, but in some contexts, may apply or be adapted to asylum-seekers, stateless persons, internally displaced and returnee settings.
4. These recommendations have been written for use by UNHCR staff, WASH actors, national governmental authorities, emergency response coordinating bodies, contingency planners, programme evaluators, and any individuals or organisations involved in providing WASH services in refugee settings. WASH field staff are welcome to dip into the sections that are relevant to their activities. WASH Coordinators should have a global and holistic overall appreciation of the WASH guidelines.
5. The manual aims to complement many of the existing excellent WASH technical resources that exist in the field, helping define

which of the multitude of technical resources best describes the correct approaches to be followed. Some of the core documents that are referenced in this document include:

- ◆ Handbook for Emergencies (UNHCR, 2014)
- ◆ Water Manual for Refugee Situations (UNHCR, 1992)
- ◆ Engineering in Emergencies (RedR, 2002)
- ◆ Water and Sanitation for Populations at Risk (ACF, 2005)
- ◆ Hygiene Promotion: A Practical Manual for Relief and Development (Ferron, Morgan, O'Reilly, 2007)
- ◆ Excreta Disposal in Emergencies (WEDC, 2007)
- ◆ WEDC Technical Briefs (Various)
- ◆ Oxfam GB Technical Briefs (Various)
- ◆ Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (SPHERE, 2011)
- ◆ Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality 2nd Ed. Vol 3 (WHO, 1997)
- ◆ Public Health Engineering in Precarious Situations 2nd Ed (MSF, 2010)
- ◆ Public Health Guide for Emergencies (John Hopkins and IFRC, 2008)
- ◆ Global Strategy for Public Health (UNHCR, 2014)



Legal framework and the human rights to water and sanitation

6. In 2010 the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council explicitly recognized the human rights to water and sanitation. These rights are derived from the right to an adequate standard of living as stipulated in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international human rights treaties. Key aspects include..
 - ◆ Water must be sufficient and continuous to cover personal and domestic uses, which comprise water for drinking, washing clothes, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene.
 - ◆ Water for drinking and domestic uses must be safe and acceptable to users. It must be free from elements that constitute a threat to a person's health. Water must also be of an acceptable colour, odour, and taste to ensure that individuals will not resort to polluted alternatives.
 - ◆ Water and sanitation facilities must be physically accessible and within safe reach for all sections of the population, taking into account the needs of particular groups, including persons with disabilities, women, children and the elderly.
 - ◆ Water services must be affordable to all. No individual or group should be denied access to safe drinking water because they cannot afford to pay.

Description of phases used in this document

7. UNHCR recognises four main phases of assistance to refugees including an 'emergency' phase; a 'post emergency' phase; in some cases a 'protracted situations' phase; and finally a 'durable solutions' phase. This UNHCR WASH Manual aims to provide WASH guidance in all of these phases.

Emergency phase

8. The definition used by UNHCR for the emergency phase has been defined in the UNHCR Global Strategy for Public Health (2014 - 2018) as '*the period following a refugee emergency up to six months after population movement has stabilized*'. However, the document notes that this definition should only serve as general guidance and disease outbreaks may constitute a return to the emergency phase. Emergency WASH interventions are typically required at the locations where the refugee population crosses a border and also for establishing services at the sites where refugees are congregating or are being hosted.

Post emergency phase

9. For the purposes of this manual, the post emergency phase is described as '*the period six months after population movement has stabilized up to the period the situation is declared a protracted situation or a durable solution has been reached and the population is no longer displaced*'.



Protracted situation phase

10. The definition used by UNHCR for a protracted refugee situation is described in the UNHCR Global Trends (2013) as ‘a refugee situation in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in a given asylum country’. Based on this definition, it is estimated that some 6.3 million refugees (54% of all refugees) were in a protracted situation by the end of 2013. These refugees are currently living in 27 host countries, constituting an overall total of 33 protracted situations. In some settings the protracted phase has been known to last for more than 20 years.

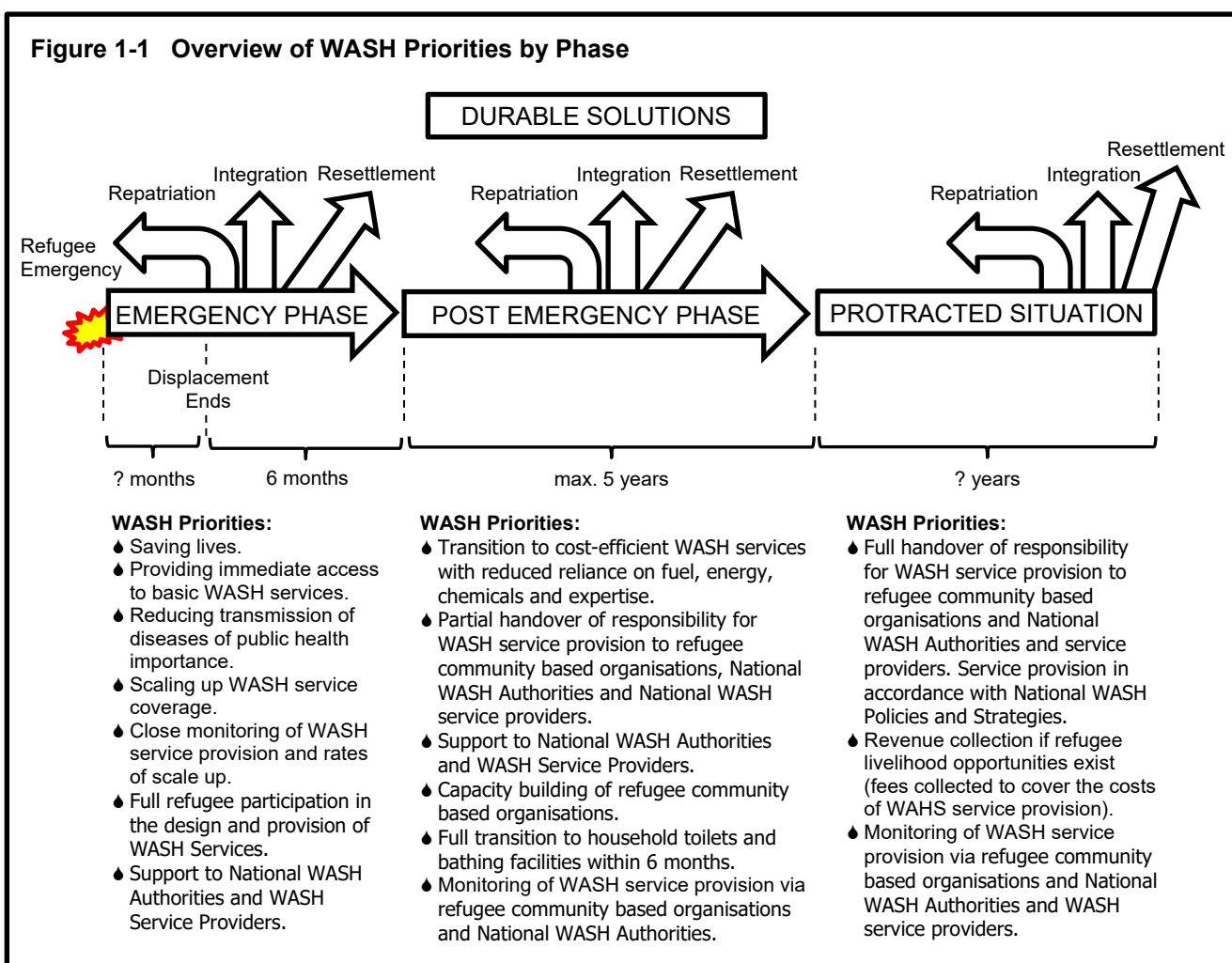
Durable solutions phase

11. The durable solutions phase can

be described as the period when displacement has ended because sustainable and permanent living arrangement has been achieved for the refugee population. UNHCR defines three possible options for durable solutions for refugees which include repatriation to their country of origin (if conditions are suitable), integration in the country of asylum, and resettlement in a third country.

How to use this UNHCR WASH Manual

12. The UNHCR WASH Manual is intended for use in all refugee settings regardless of the type or size of the displacement emergency or context. The WASH guidelines cover all phases of the displacement cycle from the



emergency up to when a durable solution is found. The WASH Manual is relevant for all displacement contexts including:

Planned camps

13. Planned camps allow centralized assistance to be provided to the refugee population. Ideally WASH services can be planned and set up before the refugee population arrives. It should be noted that in all cases UNHCR considers the establishment of camps to be a last resort option with other out of camp solutions, in particular integration, being promoted first. However, if camps are established, the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines must be provided.

Transit centres

14. Transit centres may provide basic rest, nourishment and basic Shelter, WASH and Health services en route to a permanent settlement or during repatriation. The period of stay may only be a couple of hours, or overnight. However, the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines must be provided.

Reception and registration areas

15. Reception and registration is a time consuming process for all involved. It is essential that the reception and registration area is adequately covered by the full range of water supply, excreta

management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines.

Informal settlements

16. Informal and unplanned settlements may occur in any refugee setting where groups of refugees settle in one or a number of locations. Informal unplanned camps pose a number of challenges for the provision of WASH services, especially if space is limited for communal WASH infrastructure or access is difficult for WASH service vehicles (e.g. water tankers, waste collection vehicles). Regardless of whether the settlement is planned or unplanned, a full assessment of the WASH needs must be undertaken and an adequate WASH response must be planned following water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines must be provided.

Rural dispersed settings

17. In some settings the refugee population may be dispersed as small groups of families dispersed over a large area, either on the outskirts of villages, or in isolated locations. Despite the risk of disease transmission being lower than if the refugee population were all settled in a camp, it is essential that the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines is provided.

Urban settings

18. In some settings the refugee population may migrate into towns and cities in large numbers either staying with host families, renting temporary accommodation, or congregating in public (or private) buildings or land. An influx of refugees into an urban environment can quickly overburden municipal WASH services leading to water shortages, increases in open defecation, waste dumping, contamination of water supplies and conflicts over WASH resources. It is therefore essential that the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines is provided. In urban displacement settings, WASH interventions may be required for both the host and refugee populations to bring WASH service provision back to levels experienced before the displacement crisis.

Refugee families in urban settings living with host families.

19. In some settings a proportion of the refugee families may have the option to temporarily stay with extended family or friends. Despite these families being fortunate enough to receive independent support from their host families, efforts must still be undertaken to assess their needs for support with sufficient quantities of safe water, toilet facilities, bathing facilities, hygiene materials and messages, solid waste management services, and disease vector control services

- in addition to their impact on the host family. Despite the generosity of the host family, supporting additional persons can quickly become a burden and UNHCR and WASH actors may consider developing a host family WASH assistance package of hygiene items, cash, and construction materials for household WASH improvements.

Refugee families in urban settings in rented accommodation.

20. In some displacement emergencies a proportion of the refugees may have sufficient resources to temporarily rent accommodation in towns or cities. Despite these families having limited means, efforts must still be undertaken to assess their needs for support with sufficient quantities of safe water, toilet facilities, bathing facilities, hygiene materials and messages, solid waste management services, and disease vector control services. Many refugee families may only have sufficient resources to live in urban districts where WASH services are extremely poorly delivered. Throughout the displacement crisis, levels of access to basic WASH services to refugee families in rented accommodation must be closely monitored. Neighbourhood level WASH interventions may be required in addition to household level assistance with hygiene items, and construction materials for household WASH improvements.



Refugee families in urban settings congregated in public (or private) buildings or land.

21. In some displacement emergencies a proportion of the refugees may be drawn to the livelihood opportunities available in urban settings but may have insufficient resources to rent accommodation or stay with extended family or relatives. Some refugee families make seek refuge in abandoned buildings or public spaces (schools, mosques, areas of land). These families are often particularly vulnerable and the full range of water supply, excreta management, solid waste, hygiene promotion, and disease vector control interventions covered by these WASH guidelines must be provided. UNHCR and WASH actors may also consider working with municipal authorities to identify suitable unused urban buildings and spaces that can be safely and adequately occupied by refugee families. WASH assessments should be used to determine the required WASH upgrades that are necessary so that the building or land is habitable and meets UNHCR minimum WASH requirements.

WASH assistance in urban districts where resources are under high stress due to the exceptional and unplanned influx of refugees

22. Overburdening of WASH services affects both the refugee and host population. UNHCR and WASH actors must be prepared to assess the impact of the influx on existing WASH services and reinforce the interventions carried out by existing WASH service provider. Interventions should directly target

both the refugee and host populations in those urban districts that are most affected. The locations of the urban refugee population are generally tracked through registration and distribution activities.