



# ASIA PACIFIC EMERGENCY WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) STRATEGY 2021-2030

November 2021

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world’s largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through our 192-member National Societies. Together, we act before, during and after disasters to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by Strategy 2030 – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to ‘saving lives and changing minds’.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

© International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Asia Pacific Regional Office, Kuala Lumpur, 2021

Any part of this publication may be cited, copied, translated into other languages or adapted to meet local needs without prior permission from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, provided that the source is clearly stated.

Requests for commercial reproduction should be directed to the IFRC Secretariat at [secretariat@ifrc.org](mailto:secretariat@ifrc.org)

All photos used in this study are copyright of the IFRC unless otherwise indicated.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

P.O. Box 303  
CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 730 4222  
Telefax: +41 22 733 0395  
E-mail: [secretariat@ifrc.org](mailto:secretariat@ifrc.org)  
Website: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

Asia Pacific Regional Office  
Level 10, Menara Tokio Marine Life  
189 Jalan Tun Razak  
50400 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Telephone: +603 9207 5700  
Telefax: +603 2161 0670

Follow us:

[ifrc.org](http://ifrc.org) | [twitter.com/ifrc](https://twitter.com/ifrc) | [facebook.com/ifrc](https://facebook.com/ifrc) | [instagram.com/ifrc](https://instagram.com/ifrc) | [youtube.com/ifrc](https://youtube.com/ifrc) | [tiktok.com/@ifrc](https://tiktok.com/@ifrc)



## Acknowledgements

This strategy is developed by the IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) WASH team. We are grateful to all colleagues from 22 National Societies, IFRC staff (country delegations, country cluster delegations, APRO and Geneva), colleagues from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration and other regional and global partners who participated in the online survey and contributed valuable inputs. We are particularly grateful to colleagues who took time to participate in interviews, communications and reviews to provide their perspectives and important insights.

## Purpose

The IFRC Asia Pacific Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Strategy 2021-2030 is a longer-term framework for Asia Pacific National Societies and IFRC to scale up programming in emergency WASH. This strategy represents a convergence of regional priorities distilled from consultations with various groups working in emergency WASH and disaster response, together with analyses of current environments and experiences of past operations. It is aligned with global strategies and guiding principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement<sup>1</sup> to strengthen the capacities of Asia Pacific National Societies in emergency WASH response and preparedness. It serves as reference for future review of initiatives taken here on to ensure equitable, needs-based solutions to deliver emergency WASH services to people affected by disasters.



## Background

- **Global disaster trends**

In 2021, it is estimated that 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection, translating to 1 in every 33 people worldwide. It was 1 in every 45 people a year ago. In the last decade, migration and climate change have significantly headlined global disasters and will continue to drive more people into vulnerability. There are now 51 million new and existing internally displaced persons (IDP) due to conflict and violence and 20 million refugees. The last ten years were the hottest on record, affecting sea temperatures and rainfall patterns. Outbreaks of disease are expected to increase and threaten more than 5 million children under age 5 with risk of cholera and acute watery diarrhoea.<sup>2</sup> The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused deep recession and movement restrictions not experienced in this generation.

- **Alignment with IFRC Strategy 2030 – A Platform for Change<sup>3</sup>**

It is an opportune time to draw on the renewed collective plan of action by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies to meet humanitarian challenges of the decade. The IFRC Strategy 2030 embraces change through seven transformations, to be better able to save lives and support efforts that amplify people's skills and capacities to thrive. Strategy 2030 goals contribute to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, towards enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to build back better.<sup>4</sup>

- **Guidance of the IFRC Global Strategic Direction for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene<sup>5</sup>**

The IFRC Global WASH Team has outlined overarching guidance across regional teams to maintain, improve and expand National Societies' emergency, recovery and development WASH. Each region must anticipate and address challenges due to increasing migration and climate-related changes that raise the complexity of response operations. Attention is drawn to the need for adapting emergency WASH to mainstream cash transfer programming; to expand hygiene promotion with significant upskilling in menstrual hygiene management (MHM); and to increase services in urban contexts.

Global directions on building and maintaining Red Cross Red Crescent emergency WASH response and surge capacity focus on three pillars: appropriately trained human resources, equipment for effective response, and technical support to ensure both are available and maintained.

- **Learning from the IFRC Review of Emergency Response Units (ERU)<sup>6</sup>**

Between 1995 and 2020, IFRC deployed 312 ERUs to assist host National Societies with international standardized disaster relief. Of these, 89 comprised WASH ERUs. Recommendations from a comprehensive global review of the ERU system provide timely understanding of the current humanitarian system and challenges in international assistance. The development of this strategy is significantly informed on practical issues that relate to adaptability of tools and systems, higher quality needs assessment and surge optimization, as well as balancing efficiency and effectiveness with cost and environmental sustainability.

- **Learning from COVID-19 pandemic response in Asia Pacific**

The IFRC COVID-19 Pandemic Needs Assessment for Response and Recovery Asia Pacific<sup>7</sup> makes the case for scaling up WASH programming as crucial to COVID-19 interventions. There are high numbers of homes across Asia Pacific without basic handwashing facilities, safe water and sanitation as well as high numbers of people using shared sanitation facilities, increasing the risks of airborne and contact exposure to COVID-19.<sup>8</sup> While this clearly signals crucial integration for Health and WASH, the report explicitly calls for a whole-of-organization approach and community-centred approaches.

“

The findings show that there are no major flaws but that it is essential for the ERU community to continue exploring ways in which to boost capacities within Host National Societies (HNS) and their regions that promote more inclusion, mentorship, localisation and abilities to respond with less personnel and equipment in the future.”

*IFRC Review of Emergency Response Units - Final Report, June 2021 - Executive Summary*

## Strategy Development

The Asia Pacific Emergency WASH Strategy 2021-2030 guides the IFRC to expand its reach and scope in providing leadership, innovation, best practice and research in emergency WASH. The APRO WASH team developed the strategy through a consultative process as part of continuing efforts in mapping aspects of National Societies' capacities and interests to better coordinate appropriate support.

A wide online survey was conducted between 13 August to 2 September 2021, focusing on feedback and experiences of Asia Pacific National Societies and voices of the communities they work in. Partners in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and other agencies were consulted to understand their priorities and insights. In total, 52 persons contributed to the consultation process, including 12 persons who provided key information through interviews and email communications. Combined with analyses of experiences and learning, these contributions inform collective efforts in future-proofing emergency WASH in Asia Pacific to meet evolving trends locally, regional and globally.

## Strategy Roadmap

- Regional disaster and WASH overview**

Clean water and basic sanitation is a human right in any situation, especially during and after disaster and crisis have struck. It is critical to rehabilitate water and sanitation systems paralysed by disasters to prevent the onset of disease. WASH is an essential sector in Asia Pacific, where 90 per cent of active IFRC emergency operations in 2020 have WASH activities, compared to 77 per cent in 2019. Southeast Asia remains the most disaster-struck sub-region, with floods/landslides as the most common type of disaster. In Asia Pacific IFRC emergency operations over the last four years, the percentage of people targeted with WASH services out of the number of targeted people for the whole operation has increased significantly from 27 per cent in 2017 to 51 per cent in 2020.

The responsibility of providing safe water, sanitation and hygiene to most vulnerable disaster-affected populations remains unchanged. However, the challenges of working in the humanitarian environment has changed and is expected to further evolve. In 2018, almost half of the 281 natural disaster events worldwide occurred in Asia Pacific and the region witnessed 8 of the 10 deadliest.<sup>9</sup>

- Changes in the humanitarian landscape affecting emergency WASH in Asia Pacific**

## Evolving humanitarian trends or threats

### Escalating emergencies

Disasters and crises are getting bigger and more frequent. Extreme weather events and environmental disruptions will continue to increase, as will slow-onset crises due to drought and conflict. These contribute to disasters that are harder to predict and plan for. Although there have been fewer large-scale operations lately, they come with greater complexity and last over longer durations. More people are affected - they require basic survival needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and immediate medical assistance.

Affected areas and populations are more spread out especially after floods and earthquakes.

### Economics of emergencies

Trends in IFRC WASH disaster response over 15 years show that most of the beneficiaries are served by a small number of large operations. Larger-scale operations have higher cost efficiency. However, small-scale disasters are more prevalent and as a result most response operations are relatively small scale.

An optimal response and surge system that cover small, medium and large-scale operations in rural and urban environments must be maintained. At the same time efforts are needed to improve cost efficiency of small-scale operations to make best use of resources and funding.

### Missing links

As the nature of crises is changing and affecting populations with higher vulnerabilities, international agencies recognize a need to work in new ways, to better connect between humanitarian and development efforts.<sup>10</sup>

There is an increasing use of social media tools particularly in Asia Pacific among young people. We have to be mindful of usage of such tools so as to not contribute or exacerbate the growing gaps in wealth, technology and social value systems that contribute to more people being marginalised and/or hidden.

### Paralysed in pandemic

2020 marked a turning point with the COVID-19 pandemic unfolding. The humanitarian community was not equipped to deal with the effects of pandemic. It amplified vulnerabilities for people with disabilities, older people, women and girls, as well as rising mental health issues.

Restricted travel drastically reduced the ability to respond and provide surge support across and within countries. It has delayed and suspended capacity building efforts especially those that require practical hands-on training. Remote support is challenging and has limitations especially in countries with connectivity and language issues.

## Operational challenges for emergency WASH

### Ability to adapt

Traditional systems for disaster response are set in standardized structures and procedures. They are less effective in slow-onset disasters and protracted crises. They can be negatively impacted by geological limitations, climatic changes and increasing scale and length of disasters. As an example, traditional water supply ERU equipment needs a substantial source of water to operate on site.

Global response tools for WASH were designed for large scale centralized services in rural settings. They are not sufficiently flexible or adaptable to reach scattered populations over large areas affected by disasters.

### Value for money

Amidst calls to increase climate change adaptation funding,<sup>11</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted resourcing patterns. Foreign aid has significantly increased for the health sector and social assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Preference for funding projects with visible outputs still prevail. Fewer donors are willing to commit longer term funding for National Society capacity development. Donors are increasingly demanding evidence-based results that demonstrate sustainable impact through the interventions they support.

### Local voice

The legacy of top-down and west-bound approaches in aid are shifting out of relevance in the growing voice of community.

There is rising demand especially in the Global South to end top-down foreign dominated assistance; for humanitarian organizations to address equality, inclusion and racial justice; and move towards fundraising models that amplify the dynamic work communities themselves are engaged in.<sup>13</sup>

### More hands on deck

There is not enough expertise to meet growing needs in emergency WASH. There are gaps in training, especially for local and regional capacities.

Response interventions have not engaged host National Societies sufficiently for them to retain technical expertise and equipment for future preparedness.

Deployments for surge were based on access to funds and not necessarily competency, and does not guarantee quality of response. Efforts to identify and develop new technical competencies are required to meet evolving needs and keep up with rapid changes.

- **Working together in the way forward**

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is a global network of National Societies working on the ground as auxiliary to governments and with partners to assist people affected by disasters and crises. As a volunteer-based organization, the Red Cross Red Crescent is embedded in the communities. National Societies are conduits for their inclusion and participation, working together across the resilience continuum towards development. In this way, interventions can be sustained in communities well after they conclude.

Despite a daunting humanitarian landscape, affirming the challenges will reveal opportunities to work in new ways. This is the time to draw on the strength and the network of partners within and outside the Movement, on collective experiences and hindsight. There is potential to accomplish much more in scale and efficiency of emergency WASH responses and no lack of opportunities for learning. The following analysis inform approaches, alliances and actions for moving forward:

- **Local and regional capacity for response:** To improve cost efficiency of emergency WASH operations, IFRC will accompany National Societies on a transformation process to build and maintain capacity for emergency WASH response, driven by the aspiration and strategic plan of the National Society. A clear exit plan is needed to ensure that the National Society can unilaterally retain, operationalise and improve on capacity for emergency WASH response, developed or strengthened under three interdependent pillars: appropriately trained human resources, equipment for effective response, and technical support to ensure both are available and maintained. These capacities need to be strengthened over time with latest innovations in WASH software and hardware.
- **Harmonized training and equipment:** Global tools and systems for emergency WASH are indispensable for international disaster response. It is therefore critical to ensure that training curriculum and equipment at country and regional levels connect to global tools and mechanisms in readiness for disasters that require international response. To meet the growing scale and complexity of disasters, greater cohesion across teams and levels is needed to adapt standard approaches in the WASH response architecture for local contexts and new challenges.
- **Community-focused interventions:** Communities are at the very centre of preparedness and response. Provision of timely and safe assistance for WASH needs in emergencies must respect their culture, values and local knowledge. Giving space to apply local solutions for local problems will increase uptake and acceptance of interventions that pave the way for people-led approaches to improve their health, livelihoods, dignity and social inclusion in recovery.
- **Anticipate and adapt for change:** Navigate emerging trends and issues in the humanitarian environment to identify, resource and implement sustainable solutions according to capacity. Ultimately, trends that are sustainable and viable will require capacity for developing skills to mainstream in emergency WASH programming. It is worthwhile to keep abreast with approaches in the WASH Cluster and other relevant agencies to complement efforts.
- **Optimize resources for results:** The reality of shrinking support and increased competition for resources calls for working as a distributed network. Develop and expand an effective and robust emergency WASH pool to ensure availability of technical support in the region, based on competencies and equal opportunities for WASH practitioners to be deployed. Define IFRC coordination at region and country level, so that roles and functions are well understood by National Societies and partners.
- **Leverage on diversity and strengths:** Create opportunities for stronger peer-to-peer support and develop a regional WASH network to draw on regional similarities in language, culture and geo-political alliances. Work through technical working groups and learning networks that leverage on diverse experiences of National Societies and expertise of the Movement and other partners.

- **Advocacy for partnerships:** National Societies with strong foundations built on the three pillars of WASH capacity (HR, equipment and technical support) inspire confidence and attract resources. It is therefore important to track results of multi-year funding to demonstrate successful capacity development and showcase best practices. These will facilitate the Partnerships and Resource Development teams to mobilize increased predictable funding and resources.
- **Learning and accountability:** Learning from documented Asia Pacific experiences in emergency WASH preparedness and response,<sup>14</sup> IFRC will promote approaches taken by National Societies with positive results to implement effective emergency WASH programming that is inclusive, sustainable and community-focused.



## Strategic Priorities for Asia Pacific Emergency WASH

### 1 EQUIPPING FOR EMERGENCIES

Equipping for effective response through three pillars for National Society capacity development: human resources, equipment and technical support

- Right time right place
- Right skills
- Right equipment
- Right solutions



### 2 EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Equip National Societies in empowering communities with knowledge, practice, as well as opportunities for participation and ownership of community-focused response interventions

- Leave no one behind
- Community participation
- Community knowledge
- Build back better



### 3 ENSURING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Engage effective solutions and optimized expertise that anticipate emerging issues and trends in a changing humanitarian environment

- Innovative
- Sustainable and equitable
- Localized and national
- Do no harm



## Strategic priority 1 EQUIPPING FOR EMERGENCIES

Equipping for effective response through three pillars for National Society capacity development: human resources, equipment and technical support.

### Objectives:

Asia Pacific National Societies have capacity to anticipate, plan and respond to disaster and crisis with effective emergency WASH services.

Asia Pacific National Societies, in their role as auxiliary to government, are positioned as partner of choice for emergency WASH response.

### Strategic priority 1 EQUIPPING FOR EMERGENCIES | Priority Actions

- Accompany National Societies to develop or strengthen emergency WASH capacity with tailored and respectful technical support for policy, guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOP) that are endorsed by National Society leadership and integral to National Society strategy and operations.
- Establish dedicated WASH unit and focal point at National Society headquarters to implement and manage emergency WASH programme. The WASH unit is operationally aligned to ensure programme support (Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER), Information Management (IM), Human Resources (HR), Finance, Communications) for capacity, quality assurance and evidence-based reporting. Strong sectoral integration (Health, Disaster Management, Logistics, Shelter) is needed to ensure that assessment, relief and services reach disaster-affected communities effectively.
- Develop capacity for emergency WASH preparedness through localized trainings and preposition equipment with personnel trained on their use at Branch level. Promote decentralization of capacity, resources and emergency funds as appropriate.
- Coordinate appropriate equipment and technical solutions according to the capacity and context of National Societies in harmonization with IFRC and global WASH response tools. Consider geology, mobility, cost, environment, maintenance and availability of spare parts.
- Provide support to contextualize global tools, curriculum, information, education and communication (IEC) and advocacy materials for effective use in emergency WASH programming.
- Increase advocacy for funding, resources and expertise to develop and maintain National Society capacity for emergency WASH preparedness and response.
- Support National Society engagement with local governments, water utilities, humanitarian actors and national WASH Cluster to facilitate effective emergency WASH response actions.
- Develop functional networks for learning, exchange and peer-to-peer support, for National Societies to lead activities and exchanges for greater cohesion in the WASH community.
- Facilitate peer support in specific situations where a National Society is equipped for response and well-placed to support another country in a regional context of culture, language and affiliation.

### National Society as partner of choice for emergency WASH

In 2017, Lao Red Cross (LRC) began a journey in emergency WASH capacity development. LRC was supported under the Japanese Red Cross Society-funded project to conduct emergency WASH training in six provinces. When the Attapeu Dam collapsed in July 2018, the local Red Cross Branch did not have emergency WASH capacity. Two water purification systems (Man-packs) and trained personnel were deployed from a neighbouring branch with capacity to provide clean water and assistance to people affected by floodwaters. Since that first experience in deploying emergency WASH response, LRC has expanded emergency WASH training and equipment to more branches, targeting 10 out of 18 provinces in the country by 2022.

In a small-scale operation following floods in Xayabouly Province in June 2021, the local Red Cross Branch received support from WASH teams of Luang Prabang and Vientiane Province Branches. Three Man-packs were deployed and reached 6,147 affected people from 7 villages. Through joint response, Red Cross volunteers were able to get on-the-job training. In this operation, the Provincial Disaster Management Committee worked with LRC and facilitated timely emergency WASH response. The Provincial Health Department provided water containers and buckets to assist in distributing clean processed water.

LRC coordinates well with local government units and is recognized as a partner of choice to deliver emergency WASH services.



## Strategic priority 2

# EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Equip National Societies in empowering communities with knowledge, practice, as well as opportunities for participation and ownership of community-focused response interventions.

### Objectives:

Communities in rural and urban environments targeted for emergency WASH services benefit from interventions that are tailored to address their specific needs, promoting diversity and inclusion.

Communities affected by disasters have opportunities to participate in their recovery and wellbeing.

### Strategic priority 2 EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES | Priority Actions

- Support National Society capacity to apply cross-cutting principals for community engagement and accountability (CEA)<sup>15</sup> and protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) in emergencies.<sup>16</sup>
- Ensure that these cross-cutting actions are included in emergency WASH SOPs. Guide WASH teams to apply principles of dignity, access, participation and safety in WASH facilities, services and information.<sup>17</sup>
- Develop Volunteers and Youth as community champions for emergency WASH through training on technical WASH competencies, operating WASH equipment, as well as to access opportunities for career development in emergency WASH.
- Build volunteer-base and community capacity with knowledge on disaster preparedness, community health and hygiene promotion in emergencies.<sup>18</sup>
- Scale up efforts to support and mainstream MHM in emergency WASH programming.<sup>19</sup>
- Provide support to adapt and contextualize global tools and IEC materials for hygiene promotion and community-focused interventions into local language and contexts.<sup>20</sup>
- Create opportunities for community members or groups to participate in their recovery. Examples of cash-for-work to construct latrines in Myanmar and local volunteers mobilized to build and operate faecal sludge management systems in Bangladesh can be seen on page 20 and 21, respectively.
- Support community-led decision-making processes, by integrating communication and participation throughout the programme cycle or operation and contributing to improved accountability to communities.
- Create opportunities for communities to contribute to their recovery from disasters through community committees for water and sanitation systems, equipment and maintenance.
- Integrate local knowledge, culture and practices into community interventions as well as to explore low-cost low-tech support in emergencies.



## Achievements in menstrual hygiene management

MHM is an area of challenge in the Nepali context of tradition and community. From initial efforts to address immediate safety of women and girls, Nepal Red Cross Society's (NRCS) support evolved to local advocacy and contributed significantly to government efforts to end the harmful practice of forced isolation during menstruation. MHM as a component of WASH was implemented in communities and in rural schools with good support from the government.<sup>21</sup> Since its early work from 1997, NRCS has established strong capacity for MHM in development WASH, including capacity at district (branch) level. MHM Guidelines in Nepali language is essential for programme activities and is used to inform early relief phase of WASH in emergencies.

To support emergencies, NRCS developed SOPs for prepositioning MHM kits and pre-distribution orientation for girls and women on the use of the kits. NRCS is producing a complete set of SOPs for emergency MHM response, post-relief and recovery. These inform specification of items, procurement, strategic prepositioning, distribution, orientation and monitoring.

In 2020, a dedicated MHM component has been integrated into training for Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies. NRCS is now focused on comprehensive capacity for MHM to be mainstreamed in emergency WASH preparedness and response. With support from Australian Red Cross and IFRC, NRCS is developing a full training package for MHM during emergencies. Training guidelines and curriculum will be translated into Nepali language. Upon completion, trainings will be rolled out across the country in 2022, focused on the chapters (branches) in districts with recurring disasters. A stronger focus on branch-level capacity is essential as MHM promoters must understand community-specific culture, differences between rural and urban communities, ethnicity and language.

## Strategic priority 3

# ENSURING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Engage effective solutions and optimized expertise that anticipate emerging issues and trends in a changing humanitarian environment.

### Objectives:

Emergency WASH pool of practitioners in Asia Pacific is organized, expanded and effective in providing technical and surge support.

Emergency WASH programming in Asia Pacific is relevant and ready for challenges in an evolving humanitarian environment.



### Strategic priority 3 ENSURING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES | Priority Actions

- Promote use of the IFRC WASH Technical Competency Framework (TCF)<sup>22</sup> for National Societies to plan localized capacity training, develop WASH expertise and reference peer support requirements.
- Implement the WASH TCF and online assessment system to optimize competency-based surge and to organize technical support.
- Develop thematic leads among Asia Pacific National Societies for cross learning, regional exchange and peer support in specific WASH technical areas.
- Identify and analyse **emerging issues and trends** through continuous learning to engage effective strategies. As emerging trends in the humanitarian environment are not exclusive to WASH, there are opportunities for improving sectoral integration and cross-cutting approaches. This strategic priority will focus on six areas.

## Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness

WASH initiatives are major components of the COVID-19 response: hygiene promotion and handwashing; behaviour change for safety measures and safe disposal of medical waste. Community-focused epidemic and pandemic preparedness in Asia Pacific links with community surveillance, epidemic control for volunteers tools and public health WASH to support disease control and prevention of disease transmission.

### Priority actions

- Adapt to overcome movement restrictions; ensure safely managed emergency WASH services and hygiene practices to protect staff, volunteers and communities.
- Apply learning from gains in cholera eradication and the IFRC One WASH framework for ongoing and future pandemics.
- Integrate closer with Health as epidemic and pandemic preparedness can only be effective with seamless implementation between WASH and Health to break the transmission of diseases.



## Digitalization

Knowledge of WASH concepts delivered as virtual modules can supplement remote support and taken in advance to complement face-to-face practical learning. This will provide more time for hands-on sessions and simulations to optimize WASH learning outcomes during centralized training.

### Priority actions:

- Develop remote capabilities for training and surge as critically highlighted during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
- Consider connectivity issues, local contextualization of materials and suitability of emergency WASH technical component for digital based learning.
- Explore collaboration and partnership with academic institutions for developing digital emergency WASH training modules.



## Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)

CVA is a responsive and flexible form of material assistance for affected people to overcome crisis with dignity, to exercise choice and sustain wellbeing. Scaled-up cash in emergencies is a means for effective transition to recovery. IFRC WASH has organized a Cash in WASH Technical Working Group<sup>23</sup> to support Red Cross Red Crescent WASH practitioners with knowledge-sharing, guidelines,<sup>24</sup> training, implementation and partnerships.

### Priority actions:

- Mainstream CVA in emergency WASH programming, integrated with other sectors especially Disaster Management.
- Develop guidelines and tools for CVA and market-based modalities in emergency WASH. Consider approaches that are accountable, inclusive and accessible for people targeted to receive WASH services.
- Develop capacity for local pre-crisis markets assessments to inform viability of CVA intervention and to establish pricing parameters to engage supply agreements ahead of forecasted disasters.



## Information Management

A whole-of-organization architecture for knowledge and IM will support measurement of effectiveness and evidence-based impact. Until a system is developed, data planning, collection and analysis must increase inclusion of communities and better inform real-time decision-making for emergency WASH interventions.

### Considerations:

- Use affordable technologies well-suited for humanitarian operations. Solutions using web-based channels must consider diversity, language, mobility and safety in a digital age.
- Collaborate with IM and PMER to harmonize and simplify tools for emergency WASH information flow, usability and adequate disaggregation of data.
- Increase capacity of WASH staff and volunteers to collect, analyse and use data effectively. The IFRC Data Readiness toolkit<sup>27</sup> features a Data Playbook initiative to develop data-related skillsets in National Societies and IFRC teams.<sup>28</sup>



## Green Response

The IFRC is committed to ensure that humanitarian action does not damage livelihoods, health and survival of affected people and to improve the environmental outcomes of life-saving operations.

### Priority actions:

- Mainstream Green Response in emergency WASH programming and design, integrated with other sectors (Logistics, Health).
- Produce guidance and tools specific to emergency WASH to meet Green Response criteria; e.g. sector-specific guidelines for managing solid waste.<sup>25</sup>
- Develop capacity for National Societies to embed Green Response in emergency WASH; e.g. technical webinar for Green Response in WASH and Health.<sup>26</sup>



## Innovative Partnerships

The evolving humanitarian environment calls for new ways to work with existing partners and exploring non-traditional collaborations beyond resourcing and funding. National Societies' organizational niches may open opportunities for research, education and advocacy for WASH.

### Considerations:

- Partner with government and local actors to increase community participation; increase engagement with young people through schools and academic programmes.
- Work with private companies or research institutions to explore and pilot low-cost low-tech sustainable, local solutions for emergency WASH.
- Engage academic institutions with interest in community studies and social demographics that may inform behaviour change components of emergency WASH programming.



### Feature | CVA in WASH for community empowerment

Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) piloted the use of CVA for WASH to construct 2,267 household latrines in conflict-ridden Rakhine State. Responding to needs assessments regarding open defecation, a 'cash for latrine' grant of up to Myanmar Kyat 70,000 (approximately CHF 33) was provided to individual households. The conditional grant was provided in two instalments to ensure quality standards were met in constructing latrines designed through community consultation. Health awareness focused on water and sanitation were provided together with supervision and monitoring of these activities, which were implemented in a multi-sector approach under the Community Resilience Programme.

The cash for latrines programme contributed to a sharp reduction in the practice of open defecation. As MRCS had not used CVA for WASH objectives before, the experience of cash grant design and management was reflected in a study to analyse and learn from cash-based programming implemented in Central Rakhine.<sup>29</sup>



### Feature | Working as one team for innovation and green sanitation

The Population Movement Operation is the IFRC response to the protracted crisis of displaced people from Rakhine State, living in a congested camp settlement in Bangladesh. The influx of people who crossed the border from Myanmar peaked in August 2017 with unprecedented speed and scale.<sup>30</sup> Traditional models for excreta disposal could not handle the size and extreme congestion of the camp population. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, supported by a British-led (ERU) team and IFRC, developed a full faecal sludge management (FSM) system. Its implementation for the first time in an emergency operation is a remarkable collaborative achievement in the context and complexity of FSM.

After aerobic faecal waste treatment, the dried sludge is incinerated, and treated wastewater is discharged. The effluent is clear, free of odour and safe to the environment and people living downstream of the discharge area. Following analysis and the cost of solar as clean renewable energy, the second and subsequent FSM units were constructed with solar powered pumps, reducing dependence on diesel powered generators, thus reducing the system's carbon footprint.

During construction of the first FSM unit in Camp 18, local community volunteers were recruited, trained and they now operate the system. These trained volunteers have successfully and independently constructed the same system in Camp 19. This process will be expanded with more training of community volunteers to increase community capacity and participation.

The successful innovation of the response architecture to operate in a new scenario was replicated when an FSM system was deployed in Germany for the flood operations in July 2021. Using the experience gained in Bangladesh and Germany, the IFRC will support Austrian Red Cross and other National Societies in the establishment of FSM surge capacity. This will include:

- Establishment of an FSM ERU, including a standardized equipment package developed in Bangladesh and deployed in Germany as well as a pool of human resources. The ERU will include capacity for both treatment and laboratory testing for faecal waste.
- Regional level equipment and human resources for waste treatment and laboratory testing, including the establishment of training capacity at the WASH Training Centre in Bandung. Developing this capacity will allow the IFRC to respond to a wide range of FSM needs for the WASH sector.



## Feature | A centre for effective regional strategies

The Asia Pacific WASH Centre of Excellence (CoE) is a **multi-stakeholder partnership** approach to scale up WASH capacity, research and development, learning and exchange, and cooperation and collaboration. The CoE will be developed with three primary objectives that contribute to an effective and robust WASH pool of experts.

- 1. A regional training hub** to improve WASH capacity and expertise. It draws on the WASH TCF as resource for trainers and provides an avenue for trainers to refresh and update their skills. A broader curriculum beyond traditional Red Cross Red Crescent WASH training will be developed in collaboration with partners who have specific expertise (e.g., solar energy, faecal sludge field laboratory) and offer modules with trending topics to attract external organizations.
- 2. An innovation hub** supporting regional initiatives to generate ideas, create and pilot new solutions for WASH. This will involve partnerships with academic and research institutions in the region and Movement partners with specific interests.
- 3. An exchange platform** to facilitate peer-to-peer support among National Societies; foster local/regional networks with donors and partners; host/create collaborations with international and inter-governmental organizations (ASEAN, SAARC, SPC) for WASH, disaster response and civil military initiatives.

Under each objective, the CoE will identify stakeholders from government, civil society organizations, academic institutions, private sector and media for interest to participate; to increase partnerships and amplify value-add WASH programmes beyond IFRC.

The CoE will operate on a market-based business plan to generate revenue to maintain/upgrade facilities. External training events will ensure places for National Societies and IFRC staff. Once established, a future role is envisaged for a WASH technical support hub to coordinate solutions and collaborations for developmental and emergency WASH in the region.

With coordination by the IFRC WASH team, Asia Pacific National Societies will have the opportunity to drive and contribute to the CoE objectives, drawing on their unique strengths, expertise and partnerships in the region. Linkages with other resource hubs in existence or development will be made. For example Singapore Red Cross has established a CoE for Pandemic Preparedness. Indonesian Red Cross (*Palang Merah Indonesia*) operates a WASH Training Centre in Bandung that is co-located with a leading technology institute for research. The CoE is an initiative that encompasses all three strategic priorities in this strategy for scaling up emergency WASH in Asia Pacific.

## Strategy in Action

The IFRC WASH team in APRO, country cluster delegations and country delegations will support National Societies in adopting the Asia Pacific Emergency WASH Strategy 2021-2030. The strategic priorities are drawn upon dynamics discerned at the start of the decade, to steer stakeholders in solidarity and shared direction for the work ahead. However, these are overarching aspirations that require development of tools and plans to operationalise the objectives outlined.

A basic assumption to deliver effectively on this strategy is sustained funding for emergency WASH capacity and IFRC coordination. In this connection, an evolving approach for flexible programming and funding allows greater cross-sectoral integration, local participation and innovation.

The strategy serves as a reference point to review initiatives undertaken. A mid-term review will be organized in 2025 and recommendations of the review will inform changes to the strategy for the remaining five years.

As this strategy was being developed, some National Societies had already moved ahead, working with partners and making progress in specific approaches. Some of these are featured in illustrations and demonstrate their potential to develop specific niches. They are paving the way to amplify learning, identify best practices and areas that need more attention for scaling up emergency WASH in Asia Pacific.



## References

1. IFRC and ICRC. The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Ethics and tools for humanitarian action, Geneva, 2015 ([here](#))
2. United Nations. Global Humanitarian Overview 2021. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 2020 ([here](#))
3. IFRC. Strategy 2030: Platform for Change – global reach, local action. IFRC, Geneva, 2018 ([here](#))
4. United Nations. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. UNISDR, Geneva, 2015. Available at a glance ([here](#))
5. IFRC. A global strategic direction for Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH). WASH Team, Health and Care Department, IFRC, Geneva, 30 January 2017 ([here](#))
6. IFRC. Review of Emergency Response Units - Final Report, June 2021 (internal)
7. IFRC. COVID-19 Pandemic: Needs Assessment for Response and Recovery Asia Pacific, IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office, November 2020 ([here](#))
8. WHO and UNICEF. Hygiene Baselines pre-COVID-19 Global Snapshot, Joint Monitoring Project, 23 April 2020 ([here](#))
9. UNESCAP. Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment. Bangkok 2019 ([here](#))
10. United Nations. New Way of Working. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Policy Development and Studies Branch, 2017 ([here](#))
11. IFRC. World Disasters Report 2020: Come heat or high water, Geneva, 2020 ([executive summary here](#))
12. Brown, S. The impact of COVID-19 on development assistance. International Journal, 2021 ([summary available here](#))
13. IFRC Review of Emergency Response Units - Annex A: Current state of the humanitarian system. June 2021 (internal)
14. IFRC. Strengthening capacities of National Societies in emergency WASH response and preparedness: Case study. Asia Pacific Regional Office, IFRC, 2021 ([here](#))
15. IFRC. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Toolkit, August 2021 ([here](#))
16. IFRC. Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies, Geneva, 2018 ([here](#))
17. IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) in WASH Guidance Note, IFRC Geneva, 2021 ([here](#))
18. IFRC WASH Guidelines for hygiene promotion in emergency operations, Geneva, 2017 ([here](#))
19. IFRC Guide and Tools for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Addressing menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs ([here](#))
20. Philippine Red Cross. Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) in WASH Guidance Note ([here](#))
21. IFRC. Learning from Other National Societies: Global Menstrual Hygiene Management Experiences. IFRC Global WASH Unit, Geneva, 2020 ([here](#))
22. IFRC WASH Technical Competency Framework ([here](#))
23. IFRC Cash in WASH Technical Working Group website ([here](#))
24. IFRC. What does “Cash” mean for WASH Outcomes? CVA and WASH Technical Working Group, Geneva 2021 ([here](#))
25. IFRC and Swedish Red Cross. Managing Solid Waste: Sector-specific guidelines for the Red Cross Red Crescent. Geneva 2020 ([here](#))
26. IFRC Technical Webinar on Green Response in WASH and Health, 19 August 2021 ([recording here](#))
27. Data Readiness Toolkit featured in the Global Disaster Preparedness Centre ([here](#))
28. IFRC and The Solferino Academy. Insights and Inspirations: Data Playbook, 1 October 2021 ([here](#))
29. Key Learnings and Reflection: Myanmar Red Cross Society's Cash Programmes in Central Rakhine. British Red Cross, Myanmar Red Cross Society and IFRC, July 2020 ([here](#))
30. IFRC. Bangladesh Population Movement Operation Emergency Appeal update, 17 September 2021 ([here](#))

## Acronyms

<b>APRO</b>	Asia Pacific Regional Office
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CEA</b>	Community engagement and accountability
<b>CoE</b>	Centre of Excellence
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CVA</b>	Cash and voucher assistance
<b>ERU</b>	Emergency response unit
<b>FSM</b>	Faecal sludge management
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced persons
<b>IEC</b>	Information, education and communication
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IM</b>	Information management
<b>LRC</b>	Lao Red Cross
<b>MHM</b>	Menstrual hygiene management
<b>MRCs</b>	Myanmar Red Cross Society
<b>NRCS</b>	Nepal Red Cross Society
<b>PGI</b>	Protection, gender and inclusion
<b>PMER</b>	Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operating procedures
<b>SPC</b>	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
<b>TCF</b>	Technical Competency Framework
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene



## The fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

### Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

### Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

### Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

### Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

### Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

### Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

### Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.





**Contact  
information:**

**IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office**

Ludovic Arnout  
WASH Coordinator  
Email: ludovic.arnout@ifrc.org  
Tel: +6019 359 7093

Web: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ifrc/>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/ifrc/>

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ifrc>

Twitter <https://www.twitter.com/ifrc/>