



ASIA PACIFIC EMERGENCY WASH STRATEGY 2021-2030



WHAT

A longer-term framework for Asia Pacific National Societies and the IFRC to scale up programming in emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to assist people affected by disasters and crises

The strategy represents a convergence of regional priorities distilled from consultations with various groups working in emergency WASH. It is focused on the voices of the communities they work in, and is aligned with global strategies and guiding principles, combined with analyses of current environments and experiences of past operations.

WHY

Clean water and sanitation is a human right and must reach populations affected by disasters and crises together with hygiene promotion to restore dignity and achieve better health outcomes

Driven by climate change and migration, disasters are getting bigger, more frequent and affecting more people. As a result, response operations have become more complex and are taking longer. WASH response architecture and approaches must keep up with changes in the operating landscape and evolving trends.

WHAT IS NEEDED

Adaptive approaches and alliances for action in emergency WASH services to be delivered by National Societies as conduits for communities' participation and inclusion

- Strengthened local and regional capacity for WASH response, harmonized with global tools and systems
- Optimal surge system with competency-based expertise for small, medium and large disasters, improved cost-efficiency for smaller-scale responses, agility to adapt for local contexts and new scenarios
- Space to apply local solutions, knowledge and values to increase community uptake and acceptance
- People-led approaches to improve their health, dignity and social inclusion in recovery
- A robust regional WASH network to draw on diverse experiences and expertise of National Societies and partners that will facilitate peer support, learning and partnerships

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



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.

Priority Actions

- Emergency WASH policy, standard operating procedure (SOP) and guidelines endorsed by leadership and integral to National Society strategy and operations
- Dedicated WASH unit and focal point at National Society headquarters to implement and manage emergency WASH programme with a decentralized approach
- Localized training and prepositioned equipment at branch level with personnel trained on their use as first responders in the community
- Technical solutions and training harmonized with IFRC and global WASH response tools
- Engagement with local governments, humanitarian actors and national WASH Cluster to facilitate coordination, resulting in effective emergency WASH response actions

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



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.

Priority Actions

- Capacity for community engagement and accountability and protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies, embedded in SOPs for WASH facilities and services
- Hygiene promotion with scaled-up menstrual hygiene management
- Information, education and communication materials and tools adapted to local context and language; local knowledge, culture and practices integrated in community interventions
- Volunteers and Youth as community champions for emergency WASH
- Communities participate in their recovery from disasters through knowledge and capacity to maintain community water and sanitation systems

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



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.

Priority Actions

- IFRC WASH Technical Competency Framework and online assessment system to implement competency-based surge optimization and capacity planning
- Thematic leads developed among Asia Pacific National Societies for cross learning and exchange in specific technical areas
- Functional networks developed for learning, exchange and peer-to-peer support for National Societies to lead activities and exchanges for greater cohesion in the WASH community
- Emerging issues and trends identified and analysed through continuous learning to engage effective strategies with sectoral integration and cross-cutting approaches

Emerging issues and trends for priority focus

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 to support Red Cross Red Crescent WASH practitioners with knowledge-sharing, guidelines, training, implementation and partnerships.

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.

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. Guidance, specific tools and capacity are being developed to mainstream Green Response in emergency WASH programming and design.

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.

Information Management (IM)



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.

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.

Strategy in Action

The IFRC WASH team in the Asia Pacific Regional Office, country cluster delegations and country delegations will support National Societies in adopting the strategy. 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. There is also a need to develop tools and plans to operationalise the objectives outlined.

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, making progress in specific approaches and developing their 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.



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