ROAD MAP 2020–2025

In 2019, humanitarian assistance reached a global peak of people in need, with the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector at the core of the response to emergencies. Too often, WASH responses fail to meet defined humanitarian or sectoral standards owing to a lack of capacity, preparedness and funding, resulting in services and assistance that are not fully accountable and do not adequately address the priority needs and expectations of the people affected. Now is the time to accelerate action to enhance the capacity of the WASH sector to provide high-quality and accountable responses, rooted in preparedness and resilience across the continuum/contiguum of the humanitarian-development nexus.

Through strengthened collective commitments and strategic engagement by all stakeholders active in the WASH sector, the implementation of the Road Map 2020–2025 will roll out innovative approaches to save lives, reach better public and environmental health outcomes and build synergies between acute and complex emergencies, humanitarian crises and long-term development. By 2025, the WASH sector will have the capacity and resources to deliver in emergencies at scale, anywhere and at any time. This will be achieved through three strategic axes and three prerequisite pillars that integrate and mainstream the core principles of humanitarian assistance (see Figure 1).

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Vision

By 2025, the WASH sector will have the capacity and resources to deliver in emergencies at scale, anywhere and any time

IMPROVED OPERATING METHODS
IN THE HUMANITARIAN WASH SECTOR

Axis 1
The humanitarian WASH response is life-saving and driven by public and environmental health outcomes.

Axis 2
The humanitarian WASH response consistently meets agreed accountability and the highest quality standards.

Axis 3
The humanitarian WASH response is predictable and results in sustainable impacts rooted in preparedness and resilience.

Strategic initiatives (axes)
- protocols and systems development
- interlinkages with other sectors
- knowledge management
- thematic capacity-building
- quality assurance and accountability systems
- mainstreaming of safe programming and CCI
- operational toolkits development
- global monitoring system set up
- resilient, preparedness and risk priorities
- engagement of development stakeholders

PREREQUISITE PILLARS FOR A FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY
IN THE HUMANITARIAN WASH SECTOR

Pillar 1
Capacity
The humanitarian WASH response has the right systems, at the right place, at the right time

Pillar 2
Coordination and partnership
The humanitarian WASH response is sustained by leadership and strategic partnerships

Pillar 3
Financing
The humanitarian WASH response is supported by innovative, flexible and predictable funding

Strategic initiatives (pillars)
- structural capacity-building (international, local actors, service providers)
- harmonized, system-wide approach
- coordination mechanisms and information management systems
- strategic and operational partnerships
- sector-financing and investments
- dedicated global fund

Source: Infographic developed by CAST, Global WASH Cluster, 2019
STRATEGIC AXES AND PILLARS

**Axis 1: The humanitarian WASH response is life-saving and is driven by public and environmental health outcomes**

The ability of the WASH sector to deliver an effective humanitarian response that addresses the life-saving needs of the affected population, at scale and with impact, is a key driver to achieving better public health outcomes through environmental health interventions in emergencies. The WASH sector is a critical requirement for other sectoral interventions in emergencies and also addresses key humanitarian principles and cross-cutting themes.1 Despite recognition of the core contributions and inter-dependency of WASH interventions, the sector is not given the support required to deliver at scale and achieve this ambitious and complex target.

As such, we will embed humanitarian WASH as an integral part of public and environmental health priorities, while maintaining a life-saving mandate and mainstreaming cross-cutting themes. We will:

- roll out and document the systematic use of epidemiological and environmental data, as available, as a driver to target emergency responses by the WASH sector 2
- create a protocol for the systematic design and documentation of humanitarian WASH responses based on the health outcomes, including the impact on lives saved and the reduction of the burden of disease
- develop agreements reinforcing and outlining the linkages between WASH and health outcomes in emergencies 3
- expand the capacity of the sector to systematically tackle environmental health risks and impact, including the hierarchical linkages between WASH, public health outcomes and environmental health interventions.

**Axis 2: The humanitarian WASH response consistently meets agreed accountability and highest quality standards**

The establishment and systematic use of a Quality Assurance and Accountability System (QAAS) across all national-level coordination platforms are required for the humanitarian WASH response to be enhanced globally. This approach acts as a vital step in meeting humanitarian charters and core principles that underpin humanitarian action and collectively strengthens the quality and accountability of the WASH sector to deliver in emergencies.

As such, we will shape the capacity of the WASH sector to deliver accountability and high-quality responses in emergencies, while maintaining public and environmental health as core objectives. We will:

- develop and roll out a system to mainstream quality assurance and accountability in all humanitarian WASH response with national governments and local actors, based on core humanitarian standards 4
- establish a framework to support the mainstreaming of safe programming and cross-cutting issues for the humanitarian WASH response, while maintaining public and environmental health as core objectives
- create a set of operational toolkits and frameworks to support coordination and programming on quality assurance and accountability
- set up a global monitoring system to measure compliance with the roll out of QAAS across countries by the global and national coordination mechanisms, including dissemination through an online dashboard.5
Axis 3: The humanitarian WASH response is predictable and results in sustainable impacts rooted in preparedness and resilience

Ending needs by reducing risks and vulnerability is now recognized as a shared vision across the humanitarian-development nexus. The WASH sector should harness the momentum created by the humanitarian-development nexus to reduce risk and vulnerability, increase resilience and advocate for sustained development, particularly for those affected by crises. Transcending the humanitarian-development divide should not jeopardize the humanitarian imperative and core principles when responding to emergencies and should leave no one behind.

As such, we will link humanitarian and development WASH programming through new and innovative approaches aimed at overcoming the ‘siloed’ and ‘business-as-usual’ approach. We will:

- advocate for engagement by development donors to strengthen a resilient and risk-informed WASH sector (allowing for quick transition and linking humanitarian and development)
- explore, expand and develop diverse operational models that support sustainable investments and strategic partnerships to reinforce a resilient, prepared and risk-informed WASH sector
- strengthen engagement and commitment across development and humanitarian WASH by all stakeholders to reinforce a resilient, prepared and risk-informed WASH sector.

Pillar 1 – Capacity: The humanitarian WASH response has the right systems, at the right place, at the right time

An effective humanitarian WASH response requires the right systems, at the right place, at the right time. This can only be accomplished through capacity development, the professionalization of the sector and creating local and global pathways for the formal and informal learning opportunities and career development for WASH professionals. A shift in the traditional approach for capacity development towards competency-based learning and a broader talent and people-management approach will further enhance capacity and diversify in the humanitarian WASH sector.

As such, we will increase humanitarian capacity in the WASH sector to enable a more predictable, effective and elevated level of quality programming and coordination. We will:

- develop a harmonized, system-wide approach for capacity development in humanitarian WASH (such as the WASH severity index, QAAS, competency framework, consolidation of tools and guidance)
- proactively enhance the capacity of WASH professionals to lead and systematically address and tackle public and environmental health risks as part of humanitarian WASH responses
- consolidate a predictable pool of competent and skilled WASH professionals that can be mobilized to respond in emergencies (such as surge, talent pools, rosters)
- embed surge capacity as a key aspect in preparedness and response planning at global and institutional levels (including with national governments, local actors and service providers)
- strengthen the capacity of national governments to prepare for, lead and coordinate a more predictable, effective and high-quality humanitarian WASH response.

Pillar 2 – Coordination and partnership: The humanitarian WASH response is sustained by effective leadership and strategic partnerships

Effective leadership and coordination support the humanitarian WASH response in difficult environments and help address poor-quality programming. Coordination mechanisms, such as the cluster approach, ensure adherence to the quality and coherence of the assistance. They also provide leadership to high-quality and accountable response strategies that are people-centred. Coordination also supports new and enhanced strategic partnerships among diverse stakeholders across preparedness, response and resilience.
As such, we will establish strategic partnerships and reinforce effective leadership and coordination mechanisms to further enhance the WASH sector to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We will:

- establish new and enhanced strategic partnerships among diverse stakeholders across the humanitarian-development nexus in fragile states, as a priority

- reinforce coordination mechanisms and information management systems among partners within the WASH sector and with other sectors

- develop operational partnerships at regional and country levels focusing on specific initiatives (such as preparedness, Ebola, cholera response as priorities)

- elaborate new and enhanced partnerships with academic institutions to support capacity development in operational research and knowledge management.

Pillar 3 – Financing: The humanitarian WASH response is supported by innovative, predictable, and flexible multi-year funding

To bridge the financing gap in humanitarian WASH, there is a proven need to invest in the sector across the continuum/contiguum of the humanitarian-development nexus. A paradigm shift from the traditional ways of funding humanitarian WASH interventions is needed across the humanitarian-development divide. This transformation requires the creation of new and innovative financing modalities that dissolve the distinction between funding for emergency and development WASH and harnesses strategic partnerships.

As such, we will identify and advocate for innovative and alternative funding opportunities and financing mechanisms (including multi-year) to support the WASH sector to respond to emergencies, while reducing risks and vulnerabilities and increasing resilience. We will:

- diversify and increase funding opportunities to attract political commitments and engagement by new and existing donors for the humanitarian WASH response

- strengthen sector-financing and investments by development WASH stakeholders (including the private sector) in humanitarian WASH to reinforce resilient, prepared and risk-informed WASH service delivery

- advocate for the establishment of a global fund dedicated to sector-financing and investments for the humanitarian WASH response (e.g., organizing a global pledging event).

ROLLING OUT THE ROAD MAP

The implementation of the Road Map 2020–2025 will align all existing resources in the WASH sector and will be further detailed in the plan to implement the Road Map 2020–2025. These strategic initiatives form the basis to define the implementation plan and to focus on key areas identified for capacity development, globally, institutionally and locally, to achieve the vision of the Road Map 2020–2025. This will be supported by a financing framework, which will outline the investments required to reach the vision, strategic axes and prerequisite pillars of the Road Map 2020–2025.
ENDNOTES

1 This includes: health, nutrition, protection, shelter and education. It also plays a vital role in human rights, protection, safety and dignity, gender and age sensitivity, and inclusive programming.

2 With consideration for specific disease outbreaks, such as cholera, Ebola and Zika.

3 This includes joint initiatives such as the one by the Global Health Cluster (GHC) and the GWC on cholera.

4 The current GWC initiative, funded by UNICEF and implemented by Oxfam GB, SI and Tufts University on QAAS provides a good model that the sector should adopt. Global WASH Cluster, ‘Guidance Note on Quality Assurance and Accountability Systems’, 2019.

5 Discussions around the set-up of certification systems for quality assurance and accountability systems in the WASH sector are taking place among donors. However, the scope of this goes beyond the WASH sector. The set-up of such certification systems should be addressed systematically for all the humanitarian sectors and applied at agency level.

6 This includes the consolidation of tools and guidance, use of competency frameworks and talent and people management approaches, QAAS.

7 This includes documentation of a series of case studies that generates evidence for innovative and alternative funding and financing opportunities and mechanisms for sector-financing and investments for the humanitarian WASH response.

8 These include technical guidance, systems development, knowledge management, quality assurance and accountability, monitoring, strategic partnerships, advocacy, fundraising and financing.
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