

# SDC Working Aid Covid-19 response for the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector

proposed by the GPW & SHA WASH

*Version 1, 3 April 2020*

## **Rationale**

The Covid-19 crisis is largely portrayed as a medical emergency, focusing response on isolation and treatment of possibly and actually infected persons, as well as stemming further virus dispersal through means of containment and social distancing. In the current rush to contain virus spreading and to treat an exponentially growing number of affected persons, it is largely missed to attribute due value of measures to mitigate potential of the virus to attain persons, hence to look into appropriate ways and means for effective preventive measures, such as health-conscious personal hygiene routines and disinfection of presumed points and vectors of contamination. Once such considerations are taken into account, automatically the intrinsic connection between water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and health, in all aspects of preventive health-relevant behavior, inoculation of resilience- relevant habits and effective treatment/containment of harmful incidents like the Covid-19 outbreak becomes very evident. The spread of the virus is closely related to water and sanitation (reinforcing the importance to look at the determinants of health in the COVID-response). Safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services are an essential part of preventing disease and protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 pandemic. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene is a fundamental determinant of health. Cleaning hands can reduce the transmission and help people stay healthy but today billions of people lack safe water, sanitation and handwashing and funding is inadequate. 40% of the population worldwide do not have access to hand washing with soap facilities at home.

Covid19 is an illustration of existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in our world. In a time of global health pandemic, existing lack of prioritization of resilient water and sanitation systems accessible and affordable to everyone become even more visible than before. The COVID19 pandemic adds to existing social pressures and combined with lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene may become a toxic cocktail coupled with security measures causing social unrest and conflicts within communities, including entire break-down of state structures.

In the response to the covid-19, access to safe water, sanitation and especially hygiene is a key determinant of health and key to reduce transmission. The latter contributes to release the pressure on the medical infrastructure and staff, preventing the further spreading of the virus is thus a key priority.

World Health Organization (WHO) summarize the most important information concerning WASH and the COVID-19 virus as follow:

- Frequent and proper hand hygiene is one of the most important measures that can be used to prevent infection with the COVID-19 virus. WASH practitioners should work to enable more frequent and regular hand hygiene by improving facilities and using proven behavior-change techniques.
- WHO guidance on the safe management of drinking-water and sanitation services applies to the COVID-19 outbreak. Extra measures are not needed. Disinfection will facilitate more rapid die-off of the COVID-19 virus.
- Many co-benefits will be realized by safely managing water and sanitation services and applying good hygiene practices.

SDC has a very strong engagement with key actors of the water sector throughout the domains of SDC i.e. South Cooperation, Global Cooperation, Cooperation with the East and Humanitarian Aid. Many of these actors and partners are approaching SDC field offices and Headquarter divisions, offering various ideas of interventions in the WASH sector to participate in the immediate prevention of the growing number of people affected by COVID-19. Effective COVID19 response requires short-, mid- and long-term action.

This document is meant as a practical working aid to address immediate operational aspects of response proposals. It is developed by the Swiss Humanitarian Aid jointly with the Global Programme Water to help taking informed decisions on how to shape best responses to the COVID-19 crisis in the field of WASH

## 2. WASH components for Covid-19 response and prevention

In general, WASH aspects for crisis response, mitigation and prevention focus on two directions:

- 1) **Prevention**, i.e. the containment of contamination or of virus propagation through continued and repeated disinfection of possibly contaminated or exposed areas, points of contact, and vectors (incl. human bodies), and
- 2) **Health-conscious hygiene practices**, durably adopted by individuals, as well as communities and societies.

These two directions again can be divided into two “hardware” and two “software” elements (upper and lower part of graph below), which largely determine feasibility, quality and impact of WASH crisis response, mitigation, and prevention:

- Availability of clean water, suitable and functional WASH infrastructure and services able to provide and maintain and make the required services accessible to all citizens;
- Sufficient and constant availability of commodities and consumables, e.g. (hand) washing facilities, disinfection equipment, soap, detergents, chemicals for disinfection, hygiene kits and material, other consumables;
- Context-based, audience-specific messages from indigenous customs and sources as well as specifically developed (e.g. through HA/development actors), context- and situation appropriate and adaptive concepts for short- and long-term messaging;
- Efficient and adaptable channels and modalities to attain generic and specific outreach of messaging while avoiding harmful impact.

Besides logical arguments (e.g. “Disinfection prevents contamination and virus spreading”), both WASH response elements must also be seen in their respective cultural and societal contexts, in particular in terms of equal and indiscriminate access for all to facilities and commodities<sup>1</sup>, and target group specific messaging. This will ultimately determine the scope and scale of specific interventions, e.g. to rather focus on provision of infrastructure, equipment and consumables, or to engage in capacity- building, behavior change oriented programs, or to design comprehensive programs under holistic objectives.

As a principle, while emergency response tenets must be addressed through quick provision and maintenance of essential hardware and consumables, WASH response is durability driven, hence the four elements presented here below are different in their characteristics, but still correlated, interdependent and subject to a process flow with sequential logic.

WASH related Covid-19 response must be area-, and condition-specific, driven by target group needs and vulnerabilities – in situations of pandemic crises, needs and vulnerabilities will be universal. Response can comprise of a comprehensive package of actions to procure hardware and equipment, ensure functionality of infrastructure and services, and simultaneously align sensitization campaigns for behavior change towards adoption of health-conscious hygiene habits. Likewise, specific to given situations, preconditions in specific areas, urgency of response and options for its scope, activities can also comprise of one or two elements only, e.g. equipment, goods and consumables can be procured without accompanying sensitization campaigns. However, in such cases, expectations with regard to the prevention of pandemics and the durable mitigation of their adverse impact can't be ambitious. Such aspirations will only be met if WASH infrastructure and services are sufficient and functional and if users are not only knowledgeable in terms of health issues related to water and sanitation, but have also adopted health conscious behavior patterns in their daily life.

The scoping guidance below is drafted to facilitate the design and planning of adequate and context specific WASH activities e.g. in response to Covid-19.

### For further overview of Covid 19 response by the water sector, visit the following websites:

UN Water: <https://www.unwater.org/coronavirus-global-health-emergency/>

WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

GWC: <https://washcluster.net/Covid-19-resources>

WASH'EM: <https://washem.info/blog/8405/covid-19-resources>

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<sup>1</sup> In reference to the 5 criteria (availability, quality, acceptability, accessibility, affordability) of Human Rights to Water and Sanitation, and principles of equality and non - discrimination

## COVID-19 WASH RESPONSE ELEMENTS

### WASH-INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES



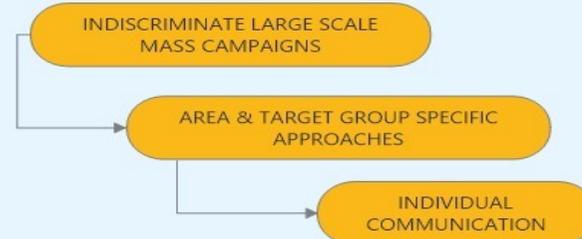
### WASH EQUIPMENT & CONSUMABLES



### MESSAGING: CONTENT & MEANS



### OUTREACH: CHANNELS & MODALITIES



### 3. Working Aid to Scope COVID-19 Response

WASH HARDWARE AND INFRASTRUCTURE			
ELEMENT	CHARACTERISTICS	CHALLENGES, RISKS	SCOPING QUESTIONS
Availability of raw water	Availability of water as such Permanence of availability	Water is not available; Water is available only intermittently; Water availability to citizens is controlled / curtailed by local power-holders	Can a planned project / program improve availability and reliability of water supply? If yes: How, at what cost and in which timeframe? Accessibility / logistic requirements / impediments? Available / required local or external expertise? Does / can the planned intervention secure unfettered equal access to water for all citizens in the area? Ability and modalities to collaborate with local power-holders?
Water quality	Sufficient quality for drinking and hygiene purposes Permanence of quality	Water quality is insufficient for intended purpose or quality is not permanently assured and maintained	Can a planned project/ program improve availability and reliability of water supply? If yes: How, at what cost and in which timeframe? Accessibility / logistic requirements / impediments? Available / required local or external expertise?
Abstraction, distribution and waste water treatment systems	Suitability, performance, reliability, continuity of abstraction, distribution and waste water collection systems Options to improve and maintain functionality of systems	Systems are not suitable, dysfunctional, out of service, or under-performing -esp. in settings with refugee-/ IDP influx	Can a planned project / program improve the functionality and reliability of water services? How, at what cost and in which timeframe? Accessibility / logistic requirements / impediments? Available / required local or external expertise?
(Local) WASH service providers and users	Capacity, functionality and efficiency of service providers	Service providers are unable, unwilling or in (under-) capacitated to provide and maintain their services	Assuming that water in sufficient quality and quantity is, or can be made available, and systems are functioning, what are the main impediments for equal access and service provision to all citizens? Can the impediments be addressed through incentives, and/or capacity building programs for service providers? How, which programs, at what cost and timeframes? How and to what extent would incentives and capacity building programs require collaboration with local power-holders? Risks to impartiality and independence? Scope and modalities of embedment of such components in comprehensive program planning?

**WASH EQUIPMENT, CONSUMABLES, COMMODITIES**

<b>ELEMENT</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>CHALLENGES, RISKS</b>	<b>SCOPING QUESTIONS</b>
(Hand) Washing facilities	Availability, suitability and functionality of (hand) washing facilities	(Hand) Washing facilities unavailable, dysfunctional, not sufficient for numbers and type of users; No systematic and regular maintenance of facilities/ equipment	Can facilities and equipment be provided, respectively made functional? How, at what cost and in which timeframe? Available and required expertise (local, external)? Possible supply, logistical and access constraints? Once facilities and equipment are provided, how will regular and constant maintenance be assured?
Disinfection equipment	Availability, suitability and functionality of disinfection equipment (e.g. WATAs, sprayers, others)	Disinfection equipment not sufficiently available, dysfunctional, not sufficient for numbers and type of users; Users are unfamiliar with use and maintenance; Systematic and regular maintenance of equipment is not assured; Risks of exclusive appropriation of equipment by power-holders	Can equipment be provided, resp. made functional? How, at what cost and in which timeframe? Available and required expertise (local, external)? Possible supply, logistic and access constraints? How functional are local and international markets? Can adequate staff training after supply of equipment be provided - especially if deployment of experts from outside is curtailed or made impossible, or if training requires proximity? Once facilities and equipment are provided: How is regular and constant maintenance assured? Are there risks of appropriation of equipment by local power-holders for exclusive use for own interests? How can such risks be mitigated?
Soap, detergents, chemicals for cleaning and disinfection	Constant, sufficient availability, suitability of soap, detergents, chemicals, etc.	Soap, detergents, chemicals are unavailable or only in insufficient quantity / quality in the area where they are needed; Risks of exclusive appropriation of goods by power-holders	Can required materials and consumables be delivered to the respective areas / target groups? Possible supply, logistic and access constraints? How functional are local markets? If required, how is training for users undertaken after supply of equipment, especially if deployment of experts from outside is impossible or if training requires proximity? Are there risks of appropriation of equipment by local power-holders for exclusive use for own interests? How can such risks be mitigated?
Hygiene kits, - materials	Constant, sufficient availability, suitability of hygiene kits and - materials	Hygiene kits and -materials. are not available, not regularly or only in insufficient quantity / quality in the area where they are needed; Risks of exclusive appropriation of goods by power-holders	Can required materials and consumables be provided to the respective areas / target groups? Possible supply, logistic and access constraints? How functional are local markets? If required: How is training for users undertaken after supply of equipment, especially if deployment of experts from outside is curtailed or impossible, or if training requires proximity?

			<p>Are there risks of appropriation of equipment by local power-holders for exclusive use for own interests? How can such risks be mitigated?</p>
Other commodities	Constant, sufficient availability, suitability of other commodities	<p>Essential commodities are not, not regularly or only in insufficiently (quantity / quality) available in the area where they are needed Risks of exclusive appropriation of goods by power-holders</p>	<p>Can required materials and consumables be provided to the respective areas / target groups? Possible supply, logistic and access constraints? How functional are local markets? If required, how is training for users undertaken after supply of equipment, especially if deployment of experts from outside is curtailed or impossible, or if training requires proximity? Are there risks of appropriation of equipment by local power-holders for exclusive use for own interests? How can such risks be mitigated?</p>
Suppliers' and users' capacities	<p>Ability and capacity of suppliers and users to ensure constant supply, maintenance of equipment and stocks, Ability and capacity of suppliers and users for proper and adequate use of equipment and materials</p>	<p>Local, national and international suppliers and manufacturers are unable to meet market demands in due time; Suppliers/manufacturers are unable to dispatch and route goods to planned destinations; Embargoes and sanctions prevent delivery of goods to certain countries / areas; Goods and equipment are seized by illicit actors; Local and international markets are dysfunctional or unable to meet demands for specific goods at affordable price and in due time</p>	<p>Are other suppliers than usual partners available and able to procure equivalent goods and equipment? At what price, in which timeframe and to what conditions? Which alternative solutions can be envisaged if suppliers and manufacturers of specific goods and equipment are unable to meet demand in time? Legal / contractual consequences? Can logistic constraints (international and in-country) be overcome? If yes: how? Is it possible to lift / avoid embargoes and sanctions for specific goods and equipment? If yes: How and within which timeframe? What are the required Processes and modalities? How can risks of illicit appropriation be avoided / mitigated? Timeframes and expectations for restoration of market functionality? Are there alternatives - or second-best options - available to serve affected populations with goods and services similar to originally foreseen ones? What are the requirements for a successful collaboration with potential partners?</p>

**MESSAGING: MEANS AND CONTENT**

ELEMENT	CHARACTERISTICS	CHALLENGES, RISKS	SCOPING QUESTIONS
<p>Customary messaging related to WASH, esp. hygiene and health aspects</p>	<p>Content, logic, credibility and acceptance of customary WASH messaging in specific contexts / areas Message bearers / conveyors; receivers Customary message dissemination</p>	<p>Customary WASH habits and messaging contradict health relevant messaging based on empirical evidence and logic; Message receivers are unable / unwilling to question or contradict message bearers / conveyors due to uncontested status of the latter within the community; Customary exchange (word to mouth, gossip, formal and informal) supersedes knowledge acquisition through more formal modalities</p>	<p>Who are the local influencers? How can they be reached and brought on board to convey customized messages relevant for health conscious habits and behavior? How and through which channels and modalities can communities be reached in a sustained manner to make behavior change towards healthier habits durable? To what extent is messaging and its impact dependent on functional infrastructure, performing services and permanent availability of equipment, goods, and consumables of sufficient quality? How can messaging aimed at behavior change be made self-reliant on indigenous channels, mechanisms and modalities?</p>
<p>Exogenic messaging related to WASH, esp. hygiene and health aspects</p>	<p>Content, logic, credibility and acceptance of exogenic WASH messaging in specific contexts / areas Message providers; receivers</p>	<p>Content, logic, and / or modalities, means and modalities of dissemination are inappropriate, insufficient, ineffective or even contradictory to local contexts; Standardized messaging is not inherently convincing for target audiences; Message providers receive acceptance only while present on ground; Transition from exogenic messaging to self-sufficient and -sustained health-conscious behavior change; Proximity, level of presence and duration of area-presence needed for external message conveyors until healthier hygiene habits are durably adopted</p>	<p>To what extent is messaging and its impact dependent on functional infrastructure, performing services and permanent availability of equipment, goods, and consumables in sufficient quality?  Who drafts context-, target audience- and area-specific contents of messages? To what extent is standardized messaging adopted and accepted? How can participatory processes best be adopted - especially if proximity between indigenous and external actors is curtailed (access issues, confinement, social distancing)? Effective, context-specific messaging requires presence or high levels of proximity to areas and populations. In situations where external, non-local stakeholders' access to areas and target audiences is curtailed, how can behavior-change relevant messaging usually led by external organizations be handed over to local / indigenous agents?</p>
<p>Messaging campaign concepts</p>	<p>Orientation, scope, scale, timing, timeframes, target audience of indigenous and exogenic message campaigns</p>	<p>Finding the right orientation, scope, timing and messages for target audience specific messaging campaigns aimed to induce adoption of healthy personal and collective hygiene behavior; The right mix between external message providers and conveyors and indigenous influencers;</p>	<p>Who defines appropriate campaigns, their scope, scale, orientation, etc.? How and through which processes (participatory, standardized, indigenous or exogenic)? How much can / should a campaign cost and be done over which timeframe? What are the expected results: immediate, short- and long-term? How are results attainment monitored and evaluated?</p>

		<p>Tailor-made area, target audience and “problem-specific” messaging - campaigns are either inadequate, too complex, too costly, requiring continued presence / proximity or they are not promising in regards of attainment of expected outcomes</p>	<p>What level of stakeholder interaction and proximity is needed, and how can it be ensured over the required / expected timeframe?          What are alternatives to stakeholder interaction / proximity in the case where access and sustained presence is curtailed, resp. continuity of key staff presence is compromised?          How can a messaging concept and its implementation be captured in a proposal for a viable project/program?          Embedment of messaging campaigns in approaches to comprehensive programming?</p>

**MESSAGE OUTREACH, CHANNELS & MODALITIES**

ELEMENT	CHARACTERISTICS	CHALLENGES, RISKS	SCOPING QUESTIONS
Indiscriminate large scale messaging	Possibility, modalities, benefits and/or harm-potential of large-scale messaging Dependence on platform providers Responsibility for content and quality	Adequacy / suitability of existing or possible platforms and modalities to launch large-scale messaging campaigns in selected areas, specific countries, regions, may not be as expected for the intended purpose; Level of control over platforms and content disseminated may be insufficient, or prone to distortion, due to dependence of platform providers; “Calling back” of erroneous or wrongly perceived messages is hardly possible; Clarity for responsibility of content is required, and intellectual rights to content must be attributable and respected; Potential of harmful mass reaction if mass-campaigned messaging is deliberately or unwittingly misinterpreted (“shitstorm”), compromising positive impact and intended benefit of mass messaging	To what extent is messaging and its impact dependent on functional infrastructure, performing services and permanent availability of equipment, goods, and consumables in sufficient quality? How can dependency on platform providers be limited, resp. how can be ensured that content is not distorted? What are best channels, modalities and timing of large-scale messaging? Who is responsible for content and formats? How can intellectual rights be enforced - especially in authoritarian contexts? Cost of campaigns? Adaption of campaigns and messages over time to different situations and target audiences’ levels of consciousness: how, when, who? Do we have options for preventive, resp. counter-measures in case of misinterpretation of mass campaigned messaging? Can “wrong” or wrongly perceived messages be called back, and if so, How?
Area-, situation and target-group specific messaging	Agreement between external “message providers” and indigenous (local) agents on area-, situation and target-group specific messages (scope, content) and dissemination channels	Messages, campaign content from external actors do not, or insufficiently reflect and consider local preconditions, specificities and target-group characteristics; Messaging is too generic; Dissemination channels are not appropriate, dysfunctional, or inefficient; Messaging is not aligned with given, resp. necessary requirements for availability and functionality of infrastructure and equipment, service providers capacity, availability of equipment, consumables, etc.	Who drafts messages of a messaging / sensitization campaign? Is it a participatory process? How can a campaign be designed and conducted through participatory collaboration when presence on ground or sufficient proximity to areas and audience is compromised, e.g. through access restrictions, security concerns, etc.? Are aspects of repeated messaging over time considered? How is the impact of messaging campaigns monitored with regard to immediate and durable effects, and who is responsible? Which channels, platforms and means are used for messaging? Frequency and intensity? What are the options to adapt channels and modalities of messaging in case of insufficient efficiency or adverse effects?
Individual, localized communication	Definition of, and agreement on individual, localized communication	Messages, campaign content from external actors do not, or insufficiently reflect and consider local preconditions, specificities and target-group characteristics;	Who drafts messages of a messaging / sensitization campaign? Is it a participatory process? How can a campaign be designed and conducted through participatory collaboration when presence on ground or sufficient

	(scope, content) and dissemination channels	<p>Messaging is too generic;  Dissemination channels are not appropriate, dysfunctional, or inefficient;  Messaging is not aligned with given, or necessary requirements for availability and functionality of infrastructure and equipment, service providers capacity, availability of equipment, consumables, etc.</p>	<p>proximity to areas and audience is compromised, e.g. through access restrictions, security concerns, etc.  Are aspects of repeated messaging over time considered?  How the is impact of messaging campaigns monitored with regard to immediate and durable effects, and who is responsible?  Which channels, platforms and means are used for messaging?  Frequency and intensity?  What are the options to adapt channels and modalities of messaging in case of insufficient efficiency or adverse effects?  How can messaging be designed if the “hardware” requirements for health-conscious behavior and habits are not met or inexistent?</p>
Use of social media	<p>Risk-benefit analysis  Level of control  Responsibility for content and quality of messages  Dependence on providers  False messaging, distortion, adverse reactions</p>	<p>Social media can have vast outreach, which can be beneficial to reach large audiences, but can also have adverse effects if messages are misinterpreted, falsified, or not appropriate for situations, audiences, etc.;  Providers are influential in terms of use and therefore the outreach of social media can be more important for them than “owners”, resp. “designers” of campaigns;  Social media campaigns are developed without due consideration of situational realities and collaboration with target audiences;  Messaging is not aligned with given, or necessary requirements for availability and functionality of infrastructure and equipment, service providers capacity, availability of equipment, consumables, etc.</p>	<p>Who organizes / orchestrates a social media campaign, and who is responsible for content and extent of use of different channels?  How and to what extent do social media providers consider / prevent particular interests (e.g. publicity slots for specific suppliers, or censored messaging of power-holders)?  How can false messaging, distortion, adverse reactions to social media campaigns be mitigated, resp. their negative impact be reduced?  How can messaging be designed if “hardware” requirements for health-conscious behavior and habits are not met or inexistent?</p>
Independence of media	<p>Type, scope and scale of collaboration with state or interest-group controlled media;  Availability and level of independence of media  Possibility of external partnerships</p>	<p>Media can be controlled by state, interest groups or power-holders, therefore not allow independent messaging;  Media control may prevent to reach some areas or certain layers of populations, or even be used for deliberate misinformation;  Level, functionality and outreach potential of media could be insufficient related to</p>	<p>Which media are available in a specific area, who controls them, and how independent are they?  Outreach capacity of different types of media?  How and to which extent is collaboration between local and external media / communication experts possible?  Considering that media staff and their organizations are often considered suspicious, how and how efficiently can media campaign be organized and conducted?  To what extent and under which conditions are we ready to collaborate with biased media?</p>

		<p>importance, type, scope and scale of planned campaigns;  The possibility to involve external media is limited;  Presence and sufficient proximity of external actors in countries or campaign areas is impossible or limited due to access restrictions, logistic constraints, own resources, esp. sufficient and competent human resources</p>	<p>How can obstacles of insufficient proximity and lack of presence in campaign areas be overcome, resp. mitigated?</p>
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