

# Day 1-Comprehensive Responses

## What is currently happening?

Good examples of inclusion coming from Uganda, Ethiopia, Jordan, Iran, and other locations by most/all partners. However, they might not be carried out under the “banner” of inclusion or with a cohesive strategy of handing over service provision to government or utility.

Inclusion work has included advocacy, capacity building, engagement with development planning, etc. Many agencies mentioned taking a human rights-based approach and working to improve participation of and accountability mechanisms for persons of concern and host communities. Some individuals recognized that big “I” inclusion (i.e. formal integration of the population of forcibly displaced persons and host community into local services) requires addressing little “i” inclusion (e.g. participatory design of facilities).

Requires working with a different set of stakeholders (e.g. line ministries) in addition to regular humanitarian actors. It is essential to ensure that these activities are integrated with work in other sectors (e.g. education, livelihoods). Although there are differences in terms of the specific activities and administrative levels (e.g., WASH might target local government where education inclusion activities might focus at national level) there can be considerable benefits to linking the initiatives. Active participation of vulnerable populations (refugees and host community) is critical to achieving results. There is a lot of existing research on engaging communities, both host and refugee community.

Underpinning all work at the systems/service level (i.e. local) level is the enabling environment. This includes policy around the right to work, freedom of movement, housing land and property, etc.

## Perceptions on the UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action?

The Blueprint (BP) Collaboration in 11 countries<sup>1</sup> for WASH, Education, and Child Protection (2020-2021). Generally, this was viewed by participants as a positive development with general recognition of the challenges within/between UN agencies and the potential for improved responses if the collaboration has tangible results. The general sentiment was that often issues with WASH coordination amongst UN agencies had more to do with institutional positions (broader than WASH), decisions by Representatives and senior managers, and donor relations than with more operational issues. Going forward, partners were interested to know more tangibly what this BP process means for NGO partners in country operations in existing responses and future responses.

Although inclusion is an element within the current BP, there is a need to evaluate the work across the board in all operations and responses and not put all “inclusion efforts” into the BP.

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<sup>1</sup> : Honduras, Ecuador, Iraq, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Libya, Cameroon, Kenya, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Indonesia

Also, it was unclear to what extent the messages regarding the vision/strategy of the Blueprint have filtered down to field. It will also be important to ensure that all UN agencies engaged in WASH activities are engaged through this process (e.g. IOM who is another key WASH UN agency).

### What ideas on the way forward?

Examples given by participants for implementing comprehensive responses are found in the table below:

<b>Technical Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical standardization should be better defined- different standards exist (e.g. UNHCR, sphere), but review processes are not clear- important for hand-over to utilities</li> <li>• Adapting standards to different contexts- it may not always be appropriate to use international standards</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that all activities have a corresponding component of capacity building of local stakeholders</li> <li>• Ensuring a balance of partnerships between international and national NGOs and government</li> <li>• Hire staff that have skills required for “inclusion work” (e.g. better mix of humanitarian and development skills)</li> </ul>
<b>Non-traditional actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with the private sector will be key to sustaining inclusion. This will require looking at market-based approaches and transitioning (and translating) humanitarian approaches into development work</li> <li>• Bringing in private sector will require understanding their challenges, motives/incentives, etc.</li> <li>• Review government engagement and look to cultivate relationships with government line ministries and those not typically involved in refugee responses</li> </ul>
<b>Back office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WASH programming cannot be carried out in isolation but must build on linkages- Integrated, multi-sectoral approaches should be standardized. This includes with mainstreaming of protection into WASH</li> <li>• Ensure that WASH workforce is heterogenous with enough balance of generalist and experts, with experts balanced among sub-disciplines (not just water supply but also hygiene and behavior change, solid waste, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Action Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure evidence-based decision making by undertaking research to answer questions like: How can refugees be involved in system-approaches? How can we create more evidence to foster the successful implementation of systems-approaches?</li> </ul>

## **How can UNHCR support Partners?**

Most participants said that UNHCR advocacy has been fundamentally important but needs to be increased and connected to other sectors, research and initiatives. For some partners, UNHCR is a minor “donor” or financial contributor, however, is critical to influencing other WASH donors. Therefore, UNHCR needs to ensure it is engaging in relevant conversations with donors advocating for the WASH agenda with the CRRF and other sector initiatives (e.g. GWC Road Map). In addition, numerous individuals cited the need for UNHCR to increase its efforts on coordination, particularly at the national level.

UNHCR has done but needs to consistently and strong ensure that there is a long-term vision during the first phase of emergencies. Important to this is building relationships ahead of time with the stakeholders that will have a role in the long-term solution.

UNHCR’s website and refugee WASH resources are well recognized and appreciated. However, some felt that there could be additional targeted dissemination activities for existing resources. In addition, there are gaps with regards to resources around inclusion. Specifically- a strategy, operational plan, technical guidance on specific activities, indicators, etc. Therefore, UNHCR should work with partners to document more good practice through case studies. Additionally, there should be a link between these initiatives and GLAAS, SPHERE, JMP. Wherever possible these should collect both quantitative and quantitative data.

UNHCR should also uses its position, together with UNICEF and others to leverage COVID responses to raise the profile of the WASH sector with the goal to increase investment. Even if this is a matter of earmarking other sector investments as WASH (e.g. WASH in schools and health care facilities)

UNHCR should harmonize complex contracting mechanisms with other UN agencies. This will help NGOs be more cost efficient and effective.

UNHCR should be vocal in support of various issues plaguing the humanitarian WASH sector– specifically noted was the gender imbalance amongst managers and decision makers. Also referenced was the need to ensure the technical capacity of the WASH workforce.

## **Day 2-COVID Response**

### **What have we learned so far?**

There was an urgent need to rethink the that way we work from top to bottom. In general, most partners felt like they were able to quickly adjust to the demands under COVID with an increase in remote support and use of ICT technologies making it easier to communicate with most field locations. Connectivity and site access remain challenging but many places who

were used to these challenges (e.g. conflict zones) performed well. Many organizations came up with innovative ways for behavior change communication and information dissemination (.e.g. radio skits).

This emergency demonstrated the continued need for system strengthening. In addition, although durable and sustainable solutions are desirable, there remains scope for low-cost, quickly implemented solutions. Pandemic has further integrated WASH within Public Health responses.

Partners were pleased to see the increased attention on hand hygiene. It once again proved to be one of the most cost-effective ways to prevent disease transmission. However, the basic critical gaps of soap available to populations before COVID was exposed. With the broader WASH work we know that improving hand hygiene behaviors is an area where we invest the least.

Globally the sector responded very quickly in terms of guidance and technical information, however what became problematic was capacity to absorb additional info and the adaptation of guidance to local context (including translation).

Preparedness efforts have paid off in terms of prepositioning stocks and spares. Furthermore, the pandemic demonstrated the importance of understanding supply chains (identifying weaknesses) to inform preparedness activities. There is still a need to increase our attention and support to local procurement and production.

## **How do we build on this moving forward?**

Some ideas on how to move forward included the following:

- We must ensure that basic services are delivered.
- We need to continue work to ensure sustained behavior change.
  - There is an economic argument to be made to governments and donors to invest on hand hygiene in relevant areas such as schools and health facilities.
  - Now is a pivotal time to better understand community engagement, track population's changing perceptions over time, improve the way we engage in behavior change to not just bore people with messages
- WASH actors need to leverage the work being done by other sectors in terms of hygiene messaging (e.g. community health workers, teachers, health care workers, community-based protection, etc.)
- Continued emphasis on institutional WASH (schools, health care facilities) as well as WASH in public places.
- WASH COVID guidance cannot be static and must be updated with evidence and refined so it is accessible and strategically disseminated.

- The lessons learned from COVID should not be forgotten and the sector needs to be deliberate in efforts to document these lessons. It is critical that these lessons be captured as part of some of the global initiatives such as Hand Hygiene for All.
- It is worth reviewing our CBIs to further understand how costs and spending have changed as a result of COVID.