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Capacity Development

A scoping and feasibility study for the WASH Road Map



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This is a summary of a feasibility study into four of the WASH Road Map initiatives that relate to WASH staffing. The full report details all mapping activities, literature review, survey data, and interviews, as well as the analysis and the conclusions. The complete feasibility study is broken down into chapters for each initiative. The summary that follows provides an overview organised across themes, as all the various activities are interrelated.

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Introduction

The Humanitarian WASH sector is not performing well. A series of reports have identified issues ranging from lack of funding to poor quality control. About 30 organisations have come together to work on the 'WASH Road Map'. This is a collection of about 16 initiatives looking at various aspects of delivering WASH services, ranging from joint advocacy activities to harmonising research priorities.

The feasibility and scoping study

Four topics were identified by the WASH Road Map to improve the quantity and quality of WASH staff. These were targeted on specific issues. They were:

- 2.1 Training courses offerings WASH learning portal: a repository of all WASH capacity development opportunities on one website;
- 2.2 WASH competency framework-based certification mechanism: for an efficient and effective WASH sector equipped with the right skills;
- 2.3 Scaling up and localization for WASH learning systems: a strengthened and accessible training offer for all; and
- 3.2 Specialized WASH expertise: engage with the private sector to ensure the best WASH expertise.

This feasibility study brings together these initiatives to serve the overall outcome of the four WASH Road Map capacity building and surge capacity initiatives (2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.2), which is to enhance the capacity of practitioners in WASH-related fields and partnerships (private actors, local actors, etc).

The main objective is to ensure that the subsequent phases of the four initiatives are implemented successfully by thoroughly exploring the most efficient and effective pathways. The proposed recommendations and next steps are supported by data, desk research, and consultations with stakeholders at various levels and regions.

The study investigated:

- the feasibility of the initiatives (availability of resources/ technology and capacity to deliver);
- desirability (relevance for stakeholders and beneficiaries);
- viability (financial sustainability/business model); and
- potential for impact of each initiative.

This report is the first of two outputs for the study. Firstly, a report with recommendations (methodology, approaches, potential partners, etc) for the implementation of the initiatives in their subsequent project phases. This consists of a stand-alone summary (this document), a literature review and a report of the detailed methodology, findings and discussion. This is divided into the four initiatives and contains further comments and some minor recommendations not included in this summary.

Upon completion and sign off on this report the team will draft a concept note for subsequent phases of the four initiatives (including strategy, workplan, and methodology) validated by key WASH Road Map stakeholders.

The importance of WASH staff

Various inputs are required to provide adequate WASH services. Finance, materials and machinery, survey information and staff combine in various processes and activities to produce the various WASH outputs. A shortfall in any of the inputs will impact on the quantity and quality of the outputs. These inputs are all interrelated. Lack of finance will reduce the availability of staff, materials, and data. Particular types of machinery or processes require certain skills. The quality of staff will partly depend on their training and experience. The quantity of staff will depend on work conditions, recruitment practices and the quality of staff needed and their availability. The ability of an organisation to deliver WASH services will be constrained by these limiting factors. Whilst finance is often seen as being the bottleneck to action, there is a view that improvements in staffing will have more of an increase in efficiency and effectiveness than would increasing in budgets.

> *"… extra money will not automatically ensure universal access to these basic human requirements. Capacity at local and national level to implement scaled-up efforts on sanitation and water is a particular source of concern: training far more water professionals who understand local needs and can design and maintain systems, as well as carry out the crucial task of collecting data on progress, is of signal importance to ensuring new aid money is invested sustainably and efficiently."*[1]

[1] INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, 2007. Sanitation and Water Sixth Report of Session 2006–07 Volume I [online]. London, UK. Available from: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/126/126i.pdf.

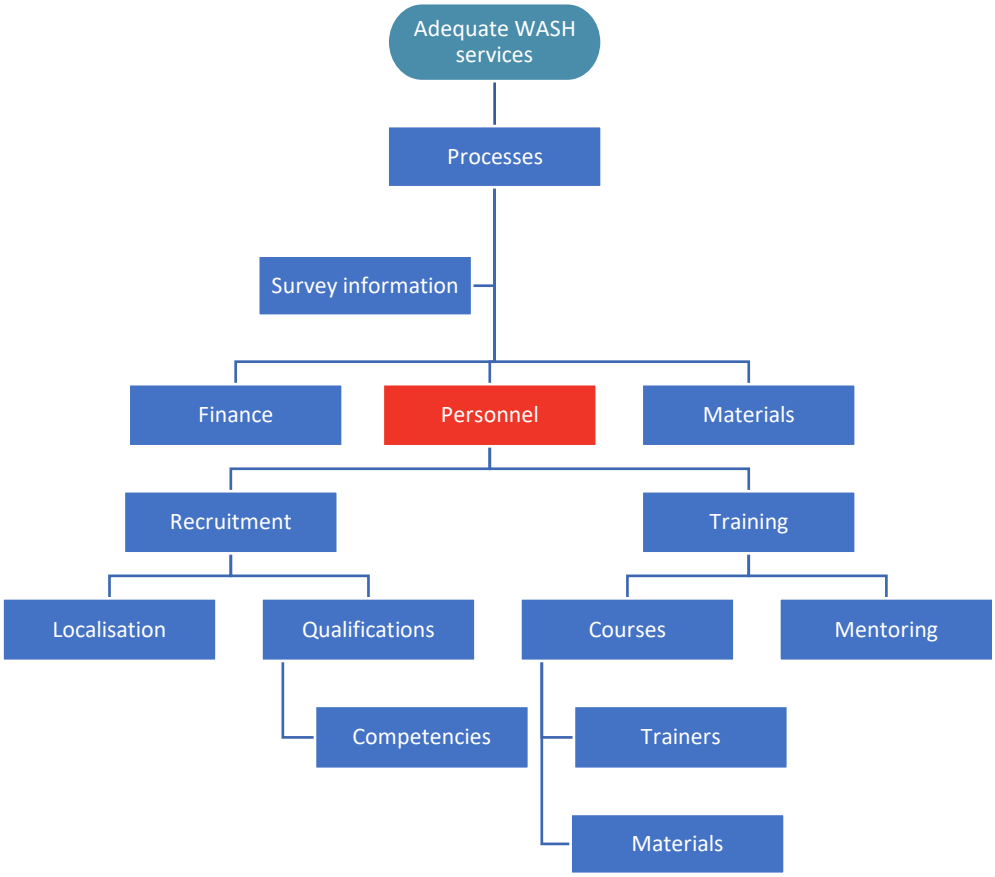


Figure 1. The inputs and outputs of a WASH system

WASH Human Resources as a system: Interdependencies between initiatives and beyond

Human Resources Management is a slow-moving system. The supply of qualified staff is not a tap that can be turned on and off quickly. Specialists such as hydrogeologists or WASH trainers may take 15 years to become skilled, with inputs of post-graduate training, mentoring and experience. Training in a particular activity may be achievable in a couple of days, but long-term development of critical thinking, so people know which tool to use, takes years.

Working on one aspect without considering how it connects to the broader system can have impacts elsewhere. For example, local recruitment of experienced staff leads to skills gaps for their previous employer. Subsidizing one training course can reduce the viability of others that are being offered on a cost recovery basis, reducing sustainability of training overall. A scholarship may have a direct benefit to the career of an individual, but provided they stay in the sector, there will be wider benefits across many organisations.

Human resource development is a sub-system of human resources. Inputs of funding, training materials, qualified experienced trainers and training facilities (including online delivery) lead to outputs of trained staff. An important interaction is with employers and employees to ensure that the content and delivery meet the wider needs of the WASH sector.

WASH staff often work in teams, forming another sub-system. Capacity and knowledge can be considered as being with a group of people. The rate of staff turnover, levels of collaboration and the ability to learn lessons influences the effectiveness of the team.

Diversity in staff

Personnel in WASH are not homogeneous. There are various ways of categorising staff. One is their 'level'. Are they a labourer, mechanic, technician or an engineer, a project manager or a programme manager? A rough way to categorise staff is looking at 'hardware' and 'software' roles, such as borehole drilling and promoting handwashing, but this can be a simplistic characterisation, as many roles require both. For example. an engineer is not competent unless they understand communities' needs and how technology impacts on gender roles. Similarly, a hygiene promoter cannot do their job if they do not understand technical health issues and how to select different handwashing facilities. As WASH is a system, creating artificial groups within staff roles can lead to barriers in communication. There will be areas of specialisation, however, with water supply, sanitation, hygiene, solid waste management and vector control all requiring expertise.

Overlapping systems

Humanitarian WASH staffing issues can be seen as a sub-sector of the wider WASH sector. The context and priorities may be different, but many aspects of humanitarian WASH are similar to those in the WASH sector. Humanitarian WASH may also be seen as a sub-sector of humanitarian action. The shared context and purpose create links with professionals working in other humanitarian sectors.

Staff as individuals

As well as viewing Human Resources as a system, it is important to recognise the individual in this system. Their motivation(s), career goals, personality and individual perspective will influence how they react to changes in the system. How they see themselves will influence their behaviour. This report looks at people working in the area of humanitarian WASH. Do the individuals working for agencies see themselves primarily as working in this sector? Or do their loyalties lie within a wider WASH sector, or a profession such as engineering or health, with their next job being out of WASH altogether?

Methodology

The study carried out by RedR UK used a range of data collection methods to do a rapid review of the landscape relating to WASH staff capacity, with a focus on the four initiatives, including:

- an extensive literature review;
- an online survey of individuals working in the Humanitarian WASH sector;
- an online survey of organisations working in the Humanitarian WASH sector;
- mapping various courses, registers, competency frameworks and accreditation systems; and
- key informant interviews with people working in Humanitarian WASH and related sectors.

Five experienced consultants worked together to analyse the information collected and develop a series of recommendations for action.

Information collected

Well over 100 relevant documents were consulted. Over 40 websites were reviewed to find details of existing competency frameworks and training courses. 178 people completed the individual survey and

eight organisations filled in the organisational survey. Over thirty individuals provided information through interviews or by email.

Limitations

Time was limited. Access to key informants was not always possible, the surveys were only open for a relatively short-period and each consultant had limited inputs. These are standard for such a study, but use of triangulation and several sources of information mitigated this problem. Some of the time spent examining the initiatives could have been diverted to wider topics. More time may have provided more detail, but as a scoping study, the main themes and issues appear to have been identified.

A more nuanced timing issue was that various activities had to be carried out concurrently, with the online surveys being posted before the literature review had been completed, the informant interviews starting before the online surveys were complete and analysis starting before all interviews had been completed. This did reduce the efficiency and the effectiveness of the study, as opportunities were missed to explore the results of the surveys with interviewees. One example is that a previous onlinesurvey from 2008[2] was only found by chance after the survey had been posted. Aligning this current survey with the previous one would have allowed for some longitudinal comparisons. This also illustrates that not all the relevant literature may have been found. Many of the reports used were grey literature from a range of organisations. Some documents cited by others are no longer available as websites have been updated or discontinued.

The respondents for the surveys may or may not be representative of the sector as a whole. The number of replies was in line with the 2008 survey, once the shorter time has been allowed for. This survey was only in English, whereas the other was also in French and Spanish. There will be a bias towards those who are well connected on social-media and with internet connections. Organisations also have particular mandates, as very few work solely in WASH. Overall they may have a main focus on health, economic development, gender or nutrition, so WASH is only one aspects of their work.

As with any study, there are risks of bias. The concept note and the WASH Road Map initiatives present particular views on human resource capacity in the sector that may contain assumptions, or a particular perspective. A notable factor here is the lack of input from staff working in the field. The Gap analyses carried out by the Humanitarian Innovation Fund show that there are differences in priorities between head office and field office staff. This also applies to the consultants. There is a danger within a small specialist area for conflicts of interest to arise, as individuals may recommend actions that are within their area of expertise. These are noted in the longer background document.

Strengths

There are also some strengths. The knowledge of the individual consultants allowed a wealth of experience to be called on enabled a wide range of key informants to be recognised rapidly. The literature review, in particular, was extensive. Being aware of limitations allows information to be triangulated and areas of continued uncertainty identified.

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[2] COSGRAVE, J., 2008. *Global Survey of gaps in WASH capacities for emergencies: Results of on-line survey* [online]. Berrings, Ireland. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Cosgrave-2/publication/215717788_Global_Survey_of_gaps_in_WASH_capacities_for_emergencies_Results_of_on-line_survey_conducted_from_July_to_September_2008/links/09e4150b6453391d88000000/Global-Survey-of-gaps-in-WAS.

The findings and recommendations

The study started with examining the topics identified in the four initiatives. Across all of the initiatives, some of the proposed actions had been described in detail, without clearly setting out the problem they were designed to address and lacking any supporting theory of change. It was soon found that some of the proposed actions had either been attempted in the past or already existed in some form. Several of the proposals had been attempted before but failed to be sustainable. Until the reasons behind the lack of sustainability are identified and addressed, these should not be repeated. Online hubs, training initiatives, courses and registers of staff all have a history of failure. Only the area of competencies has not been applied at any scale across the Humanitarian WASH or wider WASH sector. Here lessons had to be learnt from other humanitarian sectors (e.g. nutrition) and other non-humanitarian related sectors (e.g. the water industry generally).

Issues for the WASH Road Map

Some of the findings relate to the structure and organisation of the WASH Road Map itself. All four initiatives were deemed to require some refocus or re-structure. These could be considered alongside the Mid Term Review considerations.

Short-term recommendations include:

- combining 2.1 and 1.1 into a single initiative, based on initiative 1.1, noting the possibility of including aspects of capacity development in any online hub. Initiative 2.1 should be dropped as a separate activity. The development of a list of training courses should move to 2.3 and be expanded to include all capacity building activities, not just online courses;
- bringing all the remaining human resource (development) initiatives (2.2, 2.3 and 3.2) into a single working group (though still maintaining the three distinct initiatives), as they are interrelated;
- increasing the diversity of people in each initiative, bringing in more people with human resource management and human resource development expertise from organisations working on the WASH Road Map; and
- ensuring that the perspective of individual employees is considered, rather than just a top-down, sector wide approach.

There is also a wider issue about the coordination of Humanitarian WASH capacity building activities. There is no obvious 'home' for many of the activities looked at in this study. This need was identified as the Cluster system was being set up.[3] This and the other recommendations could be added to WASH Road Map Mid Term Review.

Building the evidence base

Overall, there is a significant lack of workforce related data. These are fundamental questions. Many detailed conclusions on the viability or even desirability of actions cannot be made until this picture is clearer.

[3] IASC WORKING GROUP, 2005. Better Humanitarian Response. Report from the Cluster Working Group on Water and Sanitation [online]. New York, NY, USA. Available from: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/HC_ICVA_.pdf.

The wider WASH sector is fortunate in having relatively good data on progress towards SDG 6.1 and 6.2. The proposed Water Severity Classification complements the work of the UNICEF/ WHO Joint Monitoring Project, (JMP) with the aim of providing decision-makers with evidence on what humanitarian WASH activity is needed where.

In contrast, the available data on the WASH workforce is extremely poor. A global study in 2014[4] indicated that there was a significant shortfall in staff but also demonstrated that gathering data is problematic when there is no alignment of WASH job titles. The humanitarian WASH sector presents further challenges, with short-term contracts and fluctuating staff numbers. As a result, the size and quality of the humanitarian WASH workforce is unknown.

Whilst there is data on the level of global expenditure on Humanitarian WASH, the size of any existing budgets for training (if any) is not clear.

Initiatives 2.3 and 3.2 both require information on the WASH workforce. Trainers need to know the skills gaps and the number of people needing training to develop a business case. Surge providers and registers require an idea of the numbers of people needed with what level of skill and experience. Both require a standard method of assessing staff. This has been recognised as important for many years. The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster Working Group set out its priorities in 2005, including:

> *"Capacity mapping of all cluster member organizations (and other institutions) at global level to determine their capacities, critical gaps and specific training needs, including how, where and by whom it may be done"*[5]

Workforce analysis (Initiative 3.2)

In order to make decisions about sector-wide human resources, basic data on the workforce is needed. This was not included in the details of any of the initiatives but is critical for any sector-wide planning of capacity. Initiative 3.2 addresses three solutions without being clear about the 'problem'. Surge mechanisms, specialist rosters and increased use of the private sector are all valid suggestions, although there are concerns about the cost, sustainability, and competence of the Humanitarian WASH sector to use these. However, the type and scale of the 'problem' is not clear. The 'problem' is also likely to vary from place to place. This issue was recognised in the early years of the cluster approach. Surveys recognised capacity for coordination was low. That gap is being addressed by the Global WASH cluster, but wider capacity issues still remain.

The use of market-based approaches in WASH (or not, depending on the circumstances) provides a good model. Rather than a one-size fits all approach, a situation analysis determines suitable options, e.g. using local markets directly, supporting local markets or using external sources of supply. The situation of the (global and local) WASH workforce is not clear, so selecting the most appropriate option is not possible.

The **recommendation** relating to initiative 3.2 is to step back from looking at the various short-term solutions to staff quantity and quality shortfall and focus on workforce capacity assessments. This has a parallel with Initiative 1.3 on the WASH Severity Classification (WSC), as data is required before action. Where the WSC has decades of experience to draw on from the JMP, assessment of WASH

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[4] SAYWELL, D. and DE VETTE, K., 2014. *WASH Human Resource Capacity Gaps in 15 Developing Economies. An Avoidable Crisis* [online]. London, UK. Available from: http://www.iwa-network.org/downloads/1422745887-an-avoidable-crisis-wash-gaps.pdf.

[5] CLUSTER WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND SANITATION, 2005. *Progress Report* [online]. Geneva, Switzerland. Available from: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/Clusters%2C WatSan%2C WG63%2C 20051121-88.pdf.

workforce capacity, especially in the humanitarian context, has much weaker foundations. There are methodological challenges, especially in terms of assigning people to different levels. This is where the competency framework is useful, as it will provide common benchmarks for staff. Areas of specialist skills and knowledge (e.g. market-based approaches, Menstrual Hygiene Management, hydrogeology) do provide a particular challenge.

This scoping study has tried to avoid recommending further studies and instead identify practical actions that the WASH Road Map can take forward. However, this is one area where some detailed work is required, as there is not an 'off-the-shelf' assessment tool. The Education and Health sectors have a much better understanding of their workforce than WASH has. The International Water Association and the Global WASH Cluster have developed capacity assessment tools in the past that do provide a starting point. This is a topic that requires Human Resource Management expertise, as much of the data relates to employment and recruitment, rather than WASH. The **immediate recommendation** therefore is to recruit people with these skills, rather than WASH staff, onto initiative 3.2. A **medium-term recommendation** is to develop a regular sector wide workforce survey looking at the quantity and quality of staff, using a competency framework as a reference. This will probably require a partnership with an organisation outside the (humanitarian) WASH sector to provide the necessary expertise.

A (Humanitarian) WASH competency framework (Initiative 2.2)

Initiative 2.2 proposed a competency framework-based certification mechanism for WASH staff. This research focused on possible certification mechanisms, looking at existing systems and models. The conclusion was that a certification system, whilst being technically possible, is a longer-term goal rather than an immediate activity. Most other sectors are not currently offering formal accreditation against their competency frameworks. Instead, they provide tools and resources to enable individuals and organisations to assess competencies as per their own needs. In the longer term, they do expect to develop formal accreditation mechanisms once the sector technical competency framework is well established. It is recommended that the WASH sector takes the same gradual approach, initially focusing efforts on development, launch and uptake of the competency framework before attempting to develop a formal accreditation system. Until a WASH sector competency framework is widely accepted and being used for training, recruitment and staff appraisals, moving onto certification would be premature. **A certification scheme is not currently recommended.**

However, there is a **strong recommendation** that work on a competency framework be started in the **short-term**. It is an essential tool for initiatives 2.3 and 3.2. Some research on a humanitarian WASH specific framework has been done [6] [7] and there are many models and options that need to be considered. The process of developing a framework has been recorded by various institutions, with common aspects of the process including:

- a host needs to be identified to develop, maintain and promote a WASH sector technical competency framework. In other humanitarian sectors the host organisation is either the Global Cluster, or a separate organisation or alliance of organisations. In the wider WASH sector this

[6] CILLIERS, J., 2016. Developing Standard WASH Practitioner Competencies. [online]. Loughborough University. Available from: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/research/wedc/dissertations/2015-2016/CILLIERS, JEANETTE.pdf.
[7] REED, B.J. and FEREDAY, E., 2015. Developing professional competencies for humanitarian engineers. *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers: Civil Engineering* [online]. 169 (5), pp. 49–56. Available from: https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/journal_contribution/Developing_professional_competencies_for_humanitarian_engineers/9453335.

role is with professional societies. There is currently no strong evidence to indicate which type of host is most suitable, and this decision should be taken based on sector needs and capacities. The host organisation may change over time, with one organisation convening the development stage and another taking over the maintenance role; and

- a working group should be formed to develop the competency framework to ensure alignment with sector needs. This should include representatives of key humanitarian WASH stakeholders and both technical staff and people with human resource expertise. They should ideally be senior people who are able to promote uptake of the competency framework in their organisations.
- a dedicated person should be assigned to lead the process of developing the WASH competency framework and coordinate the activities of the working group. They could be a member of staff at the host organisation, or a consultant hired specifically for this task.
- broader consultation with the WASH sector is recommended during the development of the WASH competency framework to increase buy in and uptake by the WASH sector. Consultation should aim to engage diverse stakeholders from the WASH sector including national organisations and training providers. It should be noted that consultation activities will extend the timeframe necessary for the development of the competency framework.

Structure

A competency framework needs to include various elements. This study reviewed over 30 competency frameworks from the humanitarian WASH sector and other humanitarian sectors as well as other non-humanitarian WASH competency frameworks. Whilst there is significant variation in the terminology used and the specific features included in each competency framework, there are some common elements and components used across most.

These are: competency statements, often grouped together under competency domains, and accompanying behavioural indicators that describe what effective performance looks like for each competency at a range of levels. This report recommends the following structure and components as set out in Table 1.

Table 1. WASH Competency framework structure

Competency domain	**Competency**	**Behavioural indicator**		
		Level 1: Implementation	**Level 2: Management/ technical**	**Level 3: Leadership/ strategic**
Groups of related competencies	A measurable set of knowledge, skills or attributes required to effectively perform a task or role.	A behavioural indicator describes what effective performance looks like and provides an observable means of demonstrating competence at a given level.		

The scope of a framework

A number of differing views exist with regards to defining the scope of a competency framework for the humanitarian WASH sector, for example whether and how to reflect links with longer term development work, and how to reflect functional or general humanitarian competencies for WASH. These challenges are also true of other humanitarian sectors. Their approach to these questions demonstrates a clear trend towards specialisation; rather than trying to incorporate the many different aspects of competence that are required by humanitarian practitioners. Other sectors have narrowed their focus to develop a technical competency framework for their sector, linked directly to the technical minimum standards. **The recommendation** is that the humanitarian WASH sector produce a **technical WASH competency framework** linked directly to the WASH technical minimum standards.

There are many different models and patterns that can be used for inspiration. There are two existing competency frameworks for WASH practitioners; the 'WASH Practitioners Competency Framework' developed by Cilliers[8] and the IFRC 'WASH Technical Competency Framework' [9] although there is no strong evidence that either of these is currently used widely across the sector. These WASH competency frameworks both largely align to (SPHERE) WASH technical standards as well as containing other components relevant to organisational, functional and cross cutting competencies.

Beyond these, there is an existing global Water and Environmental Management Competency Framework[10] covering anyone working in the sector (so not just engineers). However, this does not specifically relate to humanitarian contexts or even just WASH. The IStructE provides guidance[11] on how to map Humanitarian and International Development practice onto its global (structural engineering) framework whilst UK-MED[12] just adds the Core Humanitarian Competencies[13] onto whatever medical qualifications their staff already have. Pharmacists has developed a standard alone document[14]. Other clusters have developed technical competency frameworks for Child Protection, Education and Nutrition, which are now available for use within those sectors. This research has documented the learning from these other sectors to inform decision-making for the WASH sector.

An initial suggestion is that the competency framework aligns to the SPHERE standards, as users should be familiar with this layout and previous work on WASH competencies have also started here.

There are other dimensions to consider. Urban and rural contexts may require separation, cross cutting themes such as gender and inclusion may need specific mention or may be mainstreamed across all sections, short-term or specialist roles may need a different approach, the humanitarian context may be integrated within the framework or existing humanitarian competencies from the Core Humanitarian Competency Framework could be used or adapted as an additional section.

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[8] CILLIERS, J., 2016. Developing Standard WASH Practitioner Competencies. [online]. Loughborough University. Available from: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/research/wedc/dissertations/2015-2016/CILLIERS, JEANETTE.pdf.
[9] IFRC, n.d. *WASH Technical Competency Framework* [online]. Available from: https://ifrcgo.org/global-services/assets/docs/wash/IFRC WASH Competency Framework March 2020.pdf.
[10] CIWEM, 2023. *Mandatory Competence Attainment Report Guidance* [online]. Available from: https://www.ciwem.org/assets/pdf/Membership/Application Guidance/C.WEM MC Guidance.pdf.
[11] HUMANITARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PANEL, 2021. *Humanitarian and International Development Competency Framework* [online]. London, UK. Available from: https://www.istructe.org/resources/guidance/humanitarian-international-dev-framework/.
[12] UK-MED, n.d. *Competencies Framework Background & Introduction* [online]. Available from: https://www.uk-med.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UK-Med-Competencies_Framework-BackgroundIntroduction.pdf.
[13] UK-MED, n.d. *Core Humanitarian Competencies* [online]. Available from: https://www.uk-med.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UK-Med-Competencies_Framework-Core_Competencies.pdf.
[14] GRENIER, S., AKEL, M., ARAGNO, M., DONAT, I., ENRIGHT, K., KARACS, A., MCCOURT, E., MILLER, P., MORROW, M., STRAIGHT, P., BATES, I., BRUNO-TOMÉ, A., ARAKAWA, N., and KUSYNOVÁ, Z., 2021. *FIP GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK (CbHCF)* [online]. The Hague, The Netherlands. Available from: https://www.fip.org/file/5130.

Whatever competency framework is developed, it must meet the needs of employees, employers and other stakeholder such as training organisations and coordination bodies. The working group should take the final decision on the scope of the competency framework to reflect the WASH sector's needs and preferences and to build sector ownership and acceptance.

Launch

A key finding from this research is the challenge faced by other humanitarian sectors in raising awareness about, and supporting uptake of a sector competency framework. To achieve this, the organisation(s) that launches and promotes the competency framework should expect to commit significant time to these activities on an ongoing basis. The competency framework is the first part of a wider WASH sector capacity building strategy, so raising awareness of it benefits extends beyond its direct use. See the background report for more detail.

Further resources to develop

A competency framework requires additional resources to support uptake and engagement, this study recommends the following:

Tools for WASH practitioners

- Guidance on how to use the competency framework (this should be incorporated as an annex in the competency framework document);
- Competency self-assessment tool (that practitioners can use in collaboration with their line manager);

Resources to deliver a short informative session on the purpose, structure and content of the WASH Competency Framework and the use of the related tools:

- Tools for organisations to use the competency framework in their staff recruitment, learning and professional development, performance management, planning and organisational design activities, guidance for:
    - Drafting of WASH competency-based job descriptions
    - Development of WASH competency-based interviews
    - Evaluation of performance and identification of learning goals against the WASH competencies, including practitioner and manager assessment.

These resources and tools can be developed and launched in a phased approach following the development of the competency framework.

Access to training (Initiatives 2.1 and 2.3)

Initiative 2.3 looks at creating a strengthened and accessible training offer that can be scaled up and locally accessible across the sector. Initiative 2.1 looks at the creation of a WASH online learning portal that would act as a repository for WASH capacity development. Training courses are an obvious component for any capacity building feasibility study, but are only one element, alongside mentoring, staff appraisals, informal learning (such as site visits), technical presentations (such as research webinars) and reading. The area of training and capacity has a long history. The literature shows repeated calls for capacity to be improved. It also shows a repeated pattern of initiatives being tried but not being sustained. Until the underlying causes of these failures are identified, the pattern is likely to occur again.

One recurring theme in the literature is 'ownership'. Whilst training suppliers are key stakeholders, they are not 'in charge' of capacity building. Understanding of capacity issues is asymmetric. Suppliers have expertise in the topic, but dialogue with the demand side can be constrained by a lack of understanding of some issues. Costs and benefits are complex, as who pays and who benefits (directly and indirectly) has both short and long-term implications.

Availability of courses

There are courses available on Humanitarian WASH[15]. There are introductory courses, very specific courses on a single topic and courses for particular audiences. The majority of non-university courses are very short (less than a week). Since Dorea's review of WASH-relevant training for humanitarian emergencies in 2015, many of those courses no longer run. One university course has stopped due to financial viability and three new university courses have started. The issue is not the number of courses, but the sustainability, level, quality and content.

Subject matter

What is not clear from an initial review is how existing courses map onto need. There is no obvious link between 'supply' (training institutes) and 'demand' (employers and employees) on many courses. Training should be addressing skills gaps. Whilst Learning Needs Assessments can provide detailed guidance on specific content and level, they may not identify strategic needs. Matching content and level to a competency framework would improve this. It is **recommended** that employers and employees use the competency framework, once developed, to identify their training needs and that training suppliers use the framework to plan courses.

A WASH online learning platform

Online provision of courses can offer a useful route to training. This can go beyond just hosting a course to providing on-line fora for discussions, map progress across multiple courses and providing a repository for materials. However, at present, it appears that a dedicated online learning portal for Humanitarian WASH lacks a solid business case. The costs to run a specific online learning portal are relatively high compared with the potential benefits and it would require dedicated staffing to run. Both sets of costs pose challenges to the overall sustainability of the platform. The creation of the platform would also create unnecessary competition with existing internal and external resources, while possibly taking years to reach the same level of development.

Time and resources could be spent more efficiently by finding ways to better promote existing Learning Management Systems (LMS), hubs and other online services, such as DisasterReady, Kaya, Agora and CAWST. Many universities use their own internal LMS. The Global WASH Cluster has a WASH link on Agora. ReliefWeb has a search facility only for courses that have been posted on there. The question of how to share this information overlaps significantly with WASH roadmap initiative 1.1: A 'one-stop' shop for online knowledge sharing and learning. It is **recommended** that initiative 2.1 be moved to merge with initiative 1.1. Merging the two objectives will avoid duplicating effort and will allow for more cohesive consideration of how to:

- Signpost learning content across multiple platforms;
- Host forums and discussions;
- Field requests for specific content; and

[15] DOREA, C., 2015. Landscape of WASH-relevant training for humanitarian emergencies. *PLoS Currents* [online]. 7 (DISASTERS), pp. 1–9. Available from: http://currents.plos.org/disasters/article/landscape-of-wash-relevant-training-for-humanitarian-emergencies/.

- Provide materials across multiple languages.

A catalogue of training opportunities

Whist it is recommended that initiative 2.1 merges with initiative 1.1, the idea of a list of courses is still useful. UNICEF produces an occasional (PDF) catalogue of WASH courses. There is a **short-term recommendation** for UNICEF to review this catalogue and make it more useful to users by changing the format. The content needs to include more detail of each course, mapping courses onto the competency framework. It also does not include occasional courses and, most importantly, lacks all the information needed to compare and select training opportunities. There are also opportunities missing. There is also no indication of quality either of the course provider or of the trainers they use (e.g. HPass certification, etc.). A simpler format with a straightforward design and basic search options would be more useful. The format and the content should also be reviewed by an experienced trainer, and would need to be updated frequently, to cater to one-off events. Having links on the GWC website might make the list easier to find. Oversight of this action should be moved from initiative 2.1 to 2.3.

1. Localisation and expanding provision of quality learning programmes

Initiative 2.3 is also looking at localisation of training. In theory this should make WASH courses more accessible. However, the business case for this is currently hard to justify. Students look for a course that will lead to employment opportunities. Academics and other training providers across the private and public sector offer courses that have demand from students. Humanitarian WASH does not offer a sufficiently large career path to justify bespoke courses on the topic. Even WASH topics struggle to be covered at undergraduate level in some countries. Apart from funding, there is a lack of other inputs, such as appropriate textbooks, experienced staff, teaching materials and facilities (including internet access). Language adds another level of complexity.

There is an option of regional courses, following the model of the International Training Networks (ITN)[16]. Masters' courses in Humanitarian WASH that have been started at the German Jordanian University[17] focused on the Middle East and at 2iE in Burkina Faso[18]. These both have a mix of academic staff and inputs from practitioners, helping get the mix of competencies needed.

Online courses, either facilitated or self-paced, are another option. Both York University in Canada[19] and IHE in the Netherlands[20] offer online synchronous courses on Humanitarian Water Supply and Humanitarian WASH respectively. The WASH 'Em online design tool has both options in addition to their face-to-face training package. The online platform Kaya includes several WASH self-directed courses.

How any of these programmes map on to required WASH competencies, however, remains to be seen.

University level courses are prominent in this debate, but other levels of staff development are needed. Technician level courses are notable by their absence in the literature, but are likely to suffer the same issues of unclear demand, unstable or insufficient inputs and lack of data.

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[16] KRUSE, S.-E. and LENNEIYE, M., 1996. *'Training in Transition' From Donor Funded Project to National NGO* [online]. Available from: https://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/202.2-96TR-13572.pdf.
[17] https://www.gju.edu.jo/content/program-description-13543
[18] https://www.2ie-edu.org/formation/parcours-professionnels/mastere-specialise-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash-humanitaire/#
[19] https://hwe.dighr.org
[20] https://www.un-ihe.org/education/gpdp/humanitarian-wash

Given the number of possible avenues, there is **no specific recommendation** on localisation until the wider business case is more fully understood. Going forward, one option would be to map the identified WASH capacity building activities and materials against the competency framework to understand existing content strengths and gaps across learning modalities and methods. However, there are other actions discussed below that may have a positive impact on the provision of courses locally.

Coordination

From the literature review it is suspected that most of the expenditure on capacity building is spent locally, at project level. This is a trend that has been observed over the last two decades. Some of this will be specifically related to a project or concerning organisational procedures, matching training to local needs.

However, there are probably many courses held locally that could be opened up to colleagues from other agencies. This can help spread costs and create shared approaches between WASH partners. There are additional benefits of networking, sharing knowledge and building working relationships. These local opportunities will not be captured by a global list.

The GWC mandate focuses on its core aim of coordination. Its work on capacity building is mainly about 'training on coordination'. However, the 'coordination of training', especially at a local level, is still within the remit of the GWC. WASH activities can be coordinated, and training is one of those activities. This is not about national clusters leading or providing any training (except for training on coordination and information management), but sharing information about training opportunities. Thus, it is **recommended** that the national clusters share and record capacity building activities alongside other WASH activities.

Quality of courses and accreditation

There are already methods of assessing the quality of humanitarian training courses[21]. These standards are about the generic process and delivery, rather than content. Courses and providers can be certified against these standards. The Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management have processes to accredit professional development activities, university courses and internal company training schemes[22]. Although accreditation of Humanitarian WASH courses is technically possible, the business case within the sector is not clear at this stage, while there is no obvious demand from employers or employees. Until there is a demand for accreditation, then suppliers of training will not want to incur the additional costs of the assessments. Just as the competency framework can be used without an accreditation mechanism, these existing standards can still be used to plan and assess courses to provide some indication of quality with formal assessments. There is no recommendation to collectively pursue course accreditation at this stage, but existing training standards should be noted. It is **suggested** that employers adopt existing standards when developing capacity development activities.

Inputs to training

Capacity building can take many forms. Training is one method. A training course can be made up of different components, such as direct or on-line lectures, reading, videos, practical sessions, exercises,

[21] https://hpass.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Humanitarian-Learning-Standards-Handbook.pdf
[22] https://www.ciwem.org/accreditation/#cpd-accreditation

reflection and assessments. Courses are an obvious output of capacity building, with competent staff as the outcome. These outputs and outcomes are influenced by inputs.

Funding

One of the most obvious inputs to any course is the funding. The direct costs of developing and delivering a course (whether that be online, distance learning or face-to-face), tend to be the main focus. However, it is important to note that the indirect costs, (such as the time of staff attending the course, administration and value of the work they could be doing instead of training) as these can be larger than the direct cost of the course. On-line asynchronous/self-paced training can spread the direct costs over a larger cohort of students, but development costs can be several times higher than for other delivery methods.

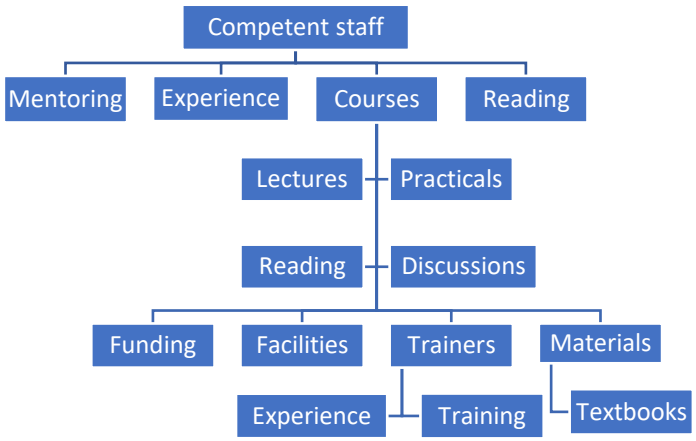


Figure 2. Inputs to build capacity

Funding for courses can be an accountability and inclusivity issue. Short-term project-based training can have an immediate and measurable impact on a project. The benefits of longer-term capacity development, on the other hand, are difficult to quantify directly. Some of these benefits will be to the sector as a whole, but the trained individual will also benefit, with enhanced career prospects and (possibly) an improved income. Restricting careers to those who can self-fund higher level courses is not inclusive, but subsidising only some people to gain qualifications can also be less than just. Cross subsidising courses, with tiered rates is one option but can again lead to anomalies about who pays and who benefits. Similar issues to relate to subsidising whole courses. When a course is being offered commercially, based on full cost recovery, providing subsidies to other training providers can undermine the viability of the commercial course. Once donor funding is removed, the other course may also fail.

The data on expenditure on WASH related capacity building is very poor. One study[23] estimated that up to 17% of one national water budget was spent on 'training', with no coordination, quality control or planning. The literature indicates that expenditure on training has moved to the project level over recent decades. Whilst this may align the training to immediate needs, it loses any strategic overview.

[23] REED, B., COATES, S., MALE, V., and RUGUMAYO, A., 2005. The inception phase of training for real in Uganda. *Maximizing the Benefits from Water and Environmental Sanitation: Proceedings of the 31st WEDC Conference*. pp. 243–246

Falling back on a call for donors to provide money does not address the fundamental challenge of the humanitarian WASH sector taking ownership of the issue. Training providers can provide a service, but they require sustainable funding streams. Assuming capacity building is the responsibility of 'others' prolongs the situation. Fragmented, short-term approaches weaken long-term investments.

The whole issue of funding is complex, requiring detailed financial accounting outside the scope of this study to find out what is being spent, by whom, and where. It could be that global expenditure on capacity building does not need to increase but just be spent in a more strategic, planned and professional manner. Individual agencies may want to investigate this further.

The whole issue of funding WASH capacity building lacks data, information and joined up analysis. This is a major constraint on sustainable provision of training. In order to bring some rigor to this question, **the recommendation** is that initiative 2.3 works with initiative 1.5 (Research and Innovation: Research Integration into Humanitarian WASH Programming), to add this to the common research agenda as a priority for action.

Trainers

Apart from funding, there are other inputs to training, such as competent educators. The literature sets out two sets of attributes the trainer should have:

- skills in planning, designing, delivering and assessing the training course, and
- experience and knowledge of the topic, including the practicalities of WASH.

The first set of competencies has been explored once by CAWST[24] and once by RedR UK with Bioforce[25], although both these frameworks relate to conducting short-term workshop style events, rather than long-term (post-graduate) courses. The second set should be partially covered by the Core Humanitarian Competency Framework. This need for two sets of competencies shows it is a specialist role, and not an activity people can expect to master quickly. Short cuts like 'training of trainers' are only suitable in very specific circumstances for only the most basic of staff development. The literature is clear that universities and colleges are not always the best training providers, but does not offer an obvious alternative. Some university and college staff may have some of the skills needed, but researchers may lack a breadth of knowledge outside their area of specialisation and may not have the teaching skills. In low- and middle-income countries, the availability of academics working in WASH is a major limitation.

There does not appear to be a clear route for WASH practitioners to develop training skills beyond the ability to run a short workshop. In depth courses could feasibly be developed to help WASH staff gain expertise in education but the sustainability of such an action is not clear. Part of the problem is back to the funding model. Until employers and employees routinely select competent training providers, the demand for quality staff is not there. Until the size of the market for all WASH courses is known, the viability of developing a course for educators in (Humanitarian) WASH is difficult to justify.

Until a workable model for funding training can be found, it is difficult to suggest a sustainable route for staff development in this area. Asking individual trainers to work towards HPass standards and using the competency frameworks is part of that route. Expecting employers to only engage competent

[24] CAWST, 2017. *Competency Framework* [online]. Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Available from: https://resources.cawst.org/guide/1defadfb/competency-framework-overview.
[25] REDR UK and BIOFORCE INSTITUTE, n.d. *International Development and Humanitarian Training Competency Framework* [online]. London, UK. Available from: https://www.alnap.org/help-library/international-development-and-humanitarian-training-competency-framework.

educators is another driver. Whilst there is no strong recommendation, there is a **suggestion** that, in the medium-term, action to support trainers should be taken. One option may be to establish (informal) networks of humanitarian WASH trainers to provide a forum for sharing experience and knowledge. A more formal option may be to establish a Working Group for trainers under the GWC.

Materials, sources and resources

Educators need inputs to develop teaching materials. Each time a new course is developed, materials need to be selected, adjusted and adapted to be used for teaching. This can be costly, repetitive and lead to variations in content. Trainers report that they draw on a wide variety of publications, research papers, reports and other sources of knowledge to prepare their courses. Lack of readily available information in the right format can make course preparation and planning more expensive. A common humanitarian WASH competency framework may help set the curriculum, but not provide the detail needed for lesson plans. There has been a long tradition of preparing shared 'training materials' going back to the 1980s. These are often lesson plans and visual aids. More recently, 'learning objects'[26] are being made available that trainers can include when developing courses. CAWST, for example, produce short videos, documents and short activities that an experienced trainer can use. WEDC has a series of short booklets that can also be used to support training.

However, the evidence of impact is unclear, especially the ability to adjust them to local contexts. The ITN network started in the early 1980s by sharing teaching materials, but this seems to have ceased by the 1990s.

Whilst production of teaching materials may not be suitable, more support to trainers can be provided. There is currently no textbook to support humanitarian WASH trainers (rather than trainees) in selecting course content and explaining WASH concepts. **Recommending** support in the creation of a comprehensive resource aligned to the levels and range of the WASH competency framework. The exact format of the resource should be determined through further consultation. Some examples include producing a WASH textbook, or creating an online hub in-keeping with the Global Nutrition Cluster's approach. A definitive resource would help the development of training courses and improve consistency in skills and knowledge. This is going to be of most benefit to the provision of local WASH training, allowing providers of existing courses on relevant topics to include humanitarian WASH related content quickly and cheaply in current teaching.

Learners

Further work on training, whilst important and urgent, does depend on the inputs from the other initiatives. Some suggested solutions are worthwhile but have not emerged as priorities so far. One gap however that has been apparent is the meaningful engagement with staff. The dialogue with the 'demand' side of training seems much weaker than the dialogue with training providers. For example, sharing the individual survey for this study relied on head office contacts in agencies and sharing on social media.

The role of learners in the provision of training can put them as 'recipients' rather than active partners in the educational process. But we can't forget that they spend time, effort and (sometimes) money on learning. Their views on capacity building need to be sought. They need to be an active part of the decision-making process to determine what is taught and how. It is **recommended** that initiative 2.3

[26] E.g. https://washresources.cawst.org/en/collections/ceac08e7/drinking-water-treatment-collection

includes employees alongside employers and training providers. This is not about having one or more representatives of the WASH workforce on a committee but having an effective way of communicating with Humanitarian WASH workers.

Other findings

This summary report only covers the main findings of the study and the core recommendations. The fact that many issues have not been prioritised does not show that they are not needed or viable, but that they may not need collective action by the WASH Road Map. Individual and course certification may well be desirable and a good target for long-term professionalisation of the workforce, but there are many steps needed before that stage is reached. There is a role for the private sector, but it has been noted that WASH agencies lack the competencies to manage commercial contracts effectively. These, and other activities, are still worthwhile, but the study has tried to identify the most strategic actions, where cross-sectoral cooperation within the WASH Road Map will be effective.

Summary

Whilst many of the detailed plans of the initiatives are technically possible, their desirability, priority and sustainability are questionable. Issues are often interlinked, with progress on one issue dependent on action elsewhere. Several suggested solutions to capacity gaps have been tried before and failed. The reasons behind these failures need to be understood if sustainable progress is to be made.

Recommendations have been kept to a minimum, to provide a strategic focus. The recommendations have been identified as short, medium and long-term. Some are strong and clear, supported by evidence, others are suggestions of options that could be considered.

Priorities Moving into Phase II

- Initiative 2.1 to be merged into initiative 1.1;
- Initiative 2.2 to focus on developing a competency framework as a matter of priority;
- Initiative 2.3 to work with UNICEF and GWC on sharing information about existing courses;
- Initiative 2.3 to engage with the humanitarian WASH workforce on capacity issues;
- Initiative 3.2 to focus on establishing workforce needs, using the competency framework to provide consistency and developing a practical human resource survey for the sector;
- Initiative 1.5 to include the long-term investigation and mapping of the funding of capacity building in its research priorities; and
- The WASH Road Map to widen the range of skills on the various initiative committees, bringing in human resource management and human resource development expertise.

Developing a competency framework has a series of more detailed recommendations, such as the process needed, stakeholder consultation, models to consider and the importance of a strong launch.

There are other suggestions, such as:

- discussing the ‘ownership’ of capacity building;
- promoting the use of existing training quality standards;
- starting a network for humanitarian WASH providers; or
- creating a comprehensive training resource to support the localisation of WASH courses.

These are not priorities, but may be useful as short-term activities, to create momentum and interest whilst longer-term, strategic actions are progressing.

There is a lot of detail in this summary and even more in the background report and literature review. It is worth taking a step back and considering why humanitarian crises make the requirement for competent staff critical. As Jan Egland, former UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, noted[27]:

> *"There were instances where the response was untested, chaotic, amateurish, doubled-up, overlapping, done by 'Mom and Pop' operations… if you're not a professional in this game, you have no right to descend on someone in their moment of crisis and do on-the- job training. Saving human lives is no place for amateurs. Why is that? Because the poor, dispossessed and disaster-prone should have at least one basic right left to them: to be protected from incompetence."*

[27] Action by Churches Together (ACT) International (2009) *Jan Egeland: Saving Human Lives is No Place for Amateurs*. See http://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/jan-egeland-saving-human-lives-no-place-amateurs