



Framework

Urban



WaterAid

Together, the documents below set out how we will achieve our vision of everyone, everywhere with clean water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030.

Global strategy

Our role and how we work

Quality programme standards and policies

Frameworks and delivery concepts

- Guidelines
- Toolkits
- Resources

The frameworks define our position, approach and programme standards for all our areas of work: a) our cross-cutting principles – human rights, sustainability, equality and inclusion, and partnership; b) our core programme approaches – systems strengthening and empowerment, WASH in other sectors, and hygiene behaviour change; c) our thematic/geographic work – water, sanitation, hygiene, and urban WASH. The frameworks point to accompanying guidelines, toolkits and resources to provide more detail on how to apply the frameworks in practice.

Our frameworks are developed through a collaborative process, involving staff across the global organisation and external stakeholders. This ensures our position, approach and standards are based on experience and best practice, making our work more effective. They are periodically updated as our learning, and that of the wider sector, evolves.

Our frameworks have been developed and approved through the Global Programmes Executive. The programme standards from all the frameworks are collated into the *Quality programme standards*.¹

Urban framework

Position

The world is urbanising quickly. Over the next two decades, the urban population of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa is expected to double.² Two-thirds of the global population will live in urban areas by 2050, though the percentage could already be as high as 84%.³ By 2030, it's projected that two billion people will live in slums,* mostly in Africa and Asia.[†]

In developed countries, urbanisation and industrialisation have been major drivers of development and poverty reduction. However, current urban growth patterns in many developing countries present a different picture. Inadequate planning and infrastructure investment without the support of robust institutions has created overcrowding, poor living conditions and increasing inequality. Higher population densities are making people more vulnerable to ill health and climate risks.

This urbanisation in developing countries presents challenges for increasing access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), with most towns and cities lacking the capacity to provide adequate services for their citizens. Small towns specifically are often overlooked and the capacity of central and local government to organise WASH services is low or not adapted to the needs of these rapidly growing centres, which increasingly concentrates poverty within them.

In our urban programming, we focus on building the capacity of municipalities and service providers to deliver WASH services to everyone, focusing on the poorest and most marginalised people. We empower these communities to claim their rights to clean water and sanitation by engaging urban stakeholders, influencing policy to facilitate an enabling environment, and giving more attention to small towns.

● Bharat puri slum, Lucknow, India.



* Depending on the context, the words 'slum', 'shanty town', 'informal settlement' and 'unplanned settlement' may be synonyms and used interchangeably or derogative – you should check which terms are appropriate.

† It's worth noting that countries have different definitions for what constitutes an urban context, town or city. Depending on the definition used, a country may be more or less 'urbanised' (see Glossary).

Approach

Our vision is of urban authorities and service providers planning, delivering and monitoring inclusive, affordable and sustainable WASH services for all by 2030. Authorities have an obligation to ensure everyone has access to these services, and we support them to develop contextually appropriate solutions to urban challenges, treating each city and town as a unique case with its own constraints and opportunities.

We work with urban communities, and the most marginalised groups within them, to ensure residents can demand better WASH services and hold their municipal providers and authorities to account. We focus on including people living in poverty, and support partners to scale-up appropriate delivery models for improving affordable, accessible and sustainable services. In cities and small towns, we take a human rights-based approach.⁴ We work with the poorest residents of informal settlements to ensure their voices are heard and they can claim their rights to WASH services. We design and advocate mechanisms and approaches that allow people to participate in a meaningful way when new services are designed, implemented and monitored. This helps to make sure their needs are addressed and urban WASH solutions are gender and disability sensitive as far as possible. We use this work to influence policy locally and nationally.

We strengthen and build the capacity of the WASH sector to create an enabling environment that supports sustainable change. We work with partners (see *Partnership framework*⁵), including municipal, regional and national governments and utility companies, to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular city or town, and focus on building the capacity of these partners to make change happen. We support authorities, providers and financial institutions to encourage local private sector participation in the delivery of services and products (including faecal sludge management and regulatory oversight of urban WASH).

Nationally, we work with ministries and development partners to highlight the key issues of urban WASH. We work together to scale-up models, share learning and make clear their obligations for ensuring access to WASH for all.

Our urban approach has five guiding principles:

1. Influential partnerships: We play a unique role in influencing the urban sector through our relationships with national and municipal governments and our links with a variety of institutions (academic, private and non-governmental). Our country programmes work with local duty-bearers to deliver inclusive WASH services across towns and cities. And we advocate the regulation of these services. We work with water utilities and private operators to develop sustainable services that reach the poorest and most marginalised people. We work with water user associations, committees and user groups on inclusive and participatory design, implementation and monitoring. We collaborate with civil society (including organisations promoting the rights of women and people with disabilities) to support communities to claim their rights and hold those in power to account. Where appropriate, we use our global relationships to draw on skills from utilities in other countries to support local operators to deliver WASH services. We work with organisations in other sectors to consider urban planning, land tenure and social structures, which all affect WASH.

2. Influencing policies and investments:

Our urban work exemplifies our approach of integrating service delivery with influencing work. We are active in policy, advocacy and programmatic spaces, calling for improved urban services among local, national and global decision-makers, and working with local governments on integrated municipal planning. We advocate increased and better-targeted financing for urban WASH and better coordination and involvement of the private and non-WASH sectors for improved access for poor and marginalised people. We influence others beyond WASH by documenting and sharing our approaches, working with the relevant stakeholders at city/town-wide level. We work with academics to build the evidence needed for advocacy and encourage others to do so.

3. Inclusive city/town-wide services: We take a holistic, city/town-wide approach to improve access to urban WASH. We work closely with people living in poverty (for example, through customer forums) to support their demands for well-funded services, to make sure services meet their needs, and to ensure behaviour changes are sustainable. We carry out and advocate approaches that empower civil society, based on human rights principles, particularly non-discrimination and equality, participation, access to information, and accountability. We support civil society to take action to ensure urban WASH service providers enable the most marginalised people to realise their rights to WASH (and other rights) (see the *Our water, our waste, our town*⁶ guidance manual). Issues of land tenure and 'cherry-picking' practices (only providing services in the most profitable areas) are intrinsically linked to access to WASH. Where possible, we work closely with civil society groups to find solutions to these issues together.

4. Context-led strategic choices: There are significant differences between cities and small towns, as well as between small towns (even within the same country). It's important for urban planners and infrastructure engineers to consider the local context and environmental and water-resource concerns, as well as the social, political and economic realities. We support comprehensive studies into small towns and other urban areas and conduct pilots to research, test and document how to scale-up innovative WASH models. Context analyses (based on political economy analyses,⁷ shit-flow diagrams,⁸ and so on), needs assessments (including power relations) and formative research are critical. Where appropriate, we value action research and pilot projects as a way of promoting and supporting innovation with scale in mind.

5. Prioritising hygiene and sanitation:

Hygiene and sanitation (see *Hygiene behaviour change framework*⁹ and *Sanitation framework*¹⁰) have been severely neglected in most urban areas, especially in the poorest communities, despite having life-changing benefits. Using evidence, we look for innovative approaches to behaviour change in urban contexts, including sanitation marketing and urban-tailored hygiene promotion strategies. We take a systems approach to sanitation (focusing on faecal sludge management), addressing the entire chain, from containment to disposal or reuse, promoting the role of small private operators. We see hygiene promotion as an integral part of urban programmes, not complementary.

Strategic fit

Urbanisation is recognised as one of the key challenges for the WASH sector in our global strategy 2015–20. Finding, implementing and advocating sustainable urban WASH solutions is essential to reach everyone, everywhere with clean water, sanitation and hygiene. Our work in urban contexts feeds into our four strategic aims as explained below.

Equality

Urban areas concentrate inequalities and reinforce discrimination. The needs of women and disabled people are not often considered in the design and implementation of urban WASH solutions. We provide evidence to influence urban WASH policy nationally and support decision-makers in towns and cities to tackle the issues. We adopt a rights-based approach, tailoring our approaches to target the most marginalised people to claim their rights.

Sustainable services

We build the capacity of utilities through partnerships using our extensive global networks. We work alongside municipalities to ensure that WASH planning for a town or city is appropriate and useful. And we make sure the right tools are in place to use these plans to influence financiers and get support for implementation. We work with national governments on urban strategies that strengthen planning, implementation and monitoring systems, using our experience and evidence from our urban programmes.

Hygiene

There is currently little evidence of successful hygiene work in urban areas. We see this as an area for investment, innovation and good documentation, so that others can scale-up our successful approaches. Formative research and strategic urban partnerships are key to sustainable hygiene behaviour change at scale in urban areas.

Integration

Working in the urban environment means working with a broad range of stakeholders. We engage with partners in the WASH sector and beyond to improve coordination and collaboration. Depending on the context, relevant partners might include academic institutions or those working in health, education, housing, infrastructure and planning.

Rationale

1. Governments are often unwilling to provide services to slums and/or informal settlements in urban areas because of multiple complex political, social and economic reasons.

Without formal land rights, people in slums often live without basic WASH services. High population density makes the problem worse, and sanitary conditions are often poorer than in rural areas. Open defecation, poor hygiene and cross-contamination of waste and water supplies create health impacts (with epidemics of water-borne diseases, such as cholera and typhoid) and environmental impacts. The knock-on effects damage people's wellbeing, dignity and economic productivity. Homeless people and 'pavement dwellers' particularly lack the means to claim their rights.

- **We practise and advocate equality and non-discrimination in access to safe drinking water and sanitation. We seek to understand the complex environments poor and marginalised people are living in, in order to make inclusive service delivery a political priority.**

2. There is a lack of coordination between levels of government, service providers, sector stakeholders and water users, with roles and responsibilities unclear.

Poor coordination and communication mean services may not get to where they are needed. In large urban areas, there is often a disconnect between national and local governments, and a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities of each. Private companies who step in to provide services, such as water vendors and faecal sludge emptying operators, are not adequately regulated.

For large-scale utilities, this leads to confusion around planned expansion, inefficiencies in improvement works, and financial constraints (as they cannot recover costs from customers and are unable to secure financial capital). Utilities are then unable to maintain or upgrade existing services or invest in expanding supply.

- **We engage with urban stakeholders to build their capacity, improve coordination, and increase WASH access.**



- **WASH Community Action**
Team members Lalam Suzan and Tumwine Christopher conduct house-to-house WASH education in Kamwokya II ward, Kampala, Uganda.

3. Urban service providers do not have the political support, incentives, financial resources or capacity to address the challenges of the poorest people.

Despite the overarching responsibility to fulfil the human rights to water and sanitation, there is often no clearly defined agency to take this on. Even when there is a mandate to expand WASH services in urban contexts, service providers can be ill-equipped or unwilling to address the needs of low-income settlements. Customers in these areas are perceived as an unviable market segment and not a priority. Informal, unmapped and peripheral settlements may fall outside the jurisdiction of municipal providers, which creates practical challenges in terms of billing.

Even where the will exists, limited disaggregated data prevents targeted efforts to reach the poorest urban communities, which are missed in planning and service delivery. Rapid growth of the market means that when services are rolled out, they quickly reach or exceed their planned capacity, which can lead to service failure (such as overflowing pit latrines).

- **We influence policy to facilitate an enabling environment in which service providers fulfil their obligations to extend WASH services to poor and marginalised people.**

4. The management of faecal sludge is particularly difficult in urban settlements.

In sub-Saharan Africa, half of urban sanitation facilities are on-site latrines.¹¹ However, most cities do not have organised methods for managing the sludge from these facilities or greywater from households. Faecal sludge management has not often been considered as a viable sanitation solution for cities, and the operators working in this sector have not been officially endorsed or even recognised. Faecal sludge management therefore remains poor in most developing countries.

- **We consider the whole sanitation value chain and focus on faecal sludge management in urban areas, involving the private sector.**

5. Poor WASH access makes urban populations more vulnerable to ill-health and climate risks.

The substantial growth of the population in at-risk areas, particularly through unplanned urban development, is one of the most important drivers of disaster risk. High inequalities and fast disease propagation increase people's vulnerability to health and climate risks. This in turn has impacts on social cohesion and wellbeing. Conversely, providing climate-proof WASH services makes vulnerable groups more resilient.

- **Climate events mitigation and adaptation is a key part of our urban approach (see *Disasters framework*¹²).**

6. Small towns contain half the urban population but receive little attention.

For every large town, there are 10 small towns growing at a similar rate.¹³ Most small towns straddle rural areas and cities. Their growth, both in size and number, is rapidly shifting the balance of urban dynamics, and increasingly concentrating poverty within them. These towns are extremely diverse in size and characteristics and require context-specific approaches to address their WASH needs. However, they are frequently overlooked. Public sector capacity is typically low in these towns and unclear mandates, limited planning and financing, and non-adapted technological solutions compound the issues.

- **We increasingly pay attention to small towns and look to make a significant impact in these smaller urban centres.**



● Martin Nyanzi Mawejje (right), sanitation engineer with Water for People Uganda, trains people previously involved in illegal pit latrine emptying in using the Gulper, Kibuye parish, Kampala, Uganda.

Quality programme standards*

Minimum standards

- M6.1 We will take a holistic, city/town-wide approach to improving access to WASH in urban areas.
- M6.2 We will consider all associated development issues, including urban planning and land tenure.
- M6.3 We will build the capacity of service providers to develop context-specific, gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches to serve people living in poverty.
- M6.4 We will work with poor urban communities using a human rights-based approach and advocate for people living in poverty locally and nationally.
- M6.5 We will take a cross-sector approach to our urban work, using stakeholder mapping to identify all relevant actors and seeking to coordinate between them and influence the urban agenda.

Full standards: strategy level

- S6.1 We will help municipalities and service providers prioritise WASH for the poorest people, using a variety of incentives and supporting the public and private sectors in the development and operation of WASH services.
- S6.2 We will focus our urban work mainly in:
 - small towns
 - informal settlements/slums in large cities
 - poor peri-urban areas
- S6.3 We will influence the setting up of affordable, sustainable and climate-resilient investments in urban WASH to target and serve the poorest and most marginalised people, by working with lenders (such as development banks) and service providers (to influence proposals).

Full standards: programme level

- PG6.1 We will take a city/town-wide approach to improving access to WASH in urban areas, considering all associated development issues (such as land tenure), so urban authorities can plan, deliver and monitor inclusive, affordable and sustainable WASH services for all by 2030.
- PG6.2 Our guiding principles for urban programmes are to ensure:
 - Influential partnerships
 - Influence over policies and investments
 - Inclusive city/town-wide services
 - Context-led strategic choices
 - Prioritisation of hygiene and sanitation
- PG6.3 We will work alongside municipalities to ensure that WASH planning for a town or city is inclusive and appropriate, and that these plans are used to influence donors and financial organisations and gain support for implementation.
- PG6.4 We will assess and help build the capacity of service providers, using proven methods, such as mentoring and peer-to-peer learning.
- PG6.5 When needed, we will use action research, in collaboration with academic institutions, to gather better data (to influence city plans and inform advocacy) and test and replicate models of service delivery. We will share our data and lessons widely.

* While each thematic area of our work has its own set of standards, you will need to take a holistic approach, meeting all relevant standards in your programme work. See *Quality programme standards*¹ for the full list.

- PG6.6 We will work on regulation issues, especially tariffs, incentives and sanctions for service providers.
- PG6.7 Where appropriate, we will promote private sector involvement, notably by developing pro-poor business models with local entrepreneurs. We will encourage the public and private sectors to work effectively on WASH service delivery.
- PG6.8 We will be open to the various innovations ongoing in the WASH sector with the aim to improve our work and increase WASH access for the poorest and most marginalised people.

Full standards: project level

- PJ6.1 We will use sector tools and political economy analyses to make assessments and support service providers to develop context-specific approaches that are inclusive, affordable and flexible for the poorest and most marginalised people.
- PJ6.2 Where appropriate, we will work with utilities, municipalities, small private operators and communities to establish operational management structures to improve the sustainability and accountability of services (including water users' associations and low-income customer service units).
- PJ6.3 We will prioritise on-site sanitation, including faecal sludge management, as this remains the primary service option for people living in poverty. In contexts where sewerage is needed and appropriate, we will focus on achieving connections that benefit the most vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- PJ6.4 We will use life-cycle cost analyses to understand revenue streams (taxes, tariffs and transfers) and to develop sustainable financial models for urban services.
- PJ6.5 We will seek ways to effect sustainable hygiene behaviour change, appropriate for the urban context.



● Julius Chisengo, next to one of the 'bajaj' vehicles that transports the Gulper pump equipment, outside the plant at Kigamboni ward, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Glossary

Sanitation value chain

The management of excreta from collection to disposal or reuse. 'Waste must first be captured and stored so that it does not come in contact with people or contaminate the local environment. In densely populated urban areas, waste must also be extracted, transported, treated and disposed of safely. Both cities and rural villages can potentially reuse excreta for agricultural purposes and energy generation.' (World Bank, 2010)¹⁴

Slums/informal settlements

'Residential areas where 1) inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing, 2) the neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from, basic services and city infrastructure and 3) the housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations, and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas.' (UN-Habitat, 2015)¹⁵

Small towns

'Settlements with a sufficiently high density of people that would justify collectively managed water services and excreta management systems. In turn, these systems would not be of interest to large cities utilities to manage due to their size, and not being financially viable.' (Bachelier et al, 2018)¹⁶

Urban

Each country has a different definition for what constitutes an urban context, a town or city. Depending on the definition used, a country may be more or less 'urbanised'. An example threshold used by the European Commission is:

- Urban centre:** 50,000 people with a minimum density of 1,500 per km²
- Urban cluster:** 5,000 people with a minimum density of 300 per km²
- Rural:** Under 5,000 people or less than 300 people per km²

● Monitoring groundwater, Lahan, Siraha, Nepal.



WaterAid/Mani Karmacharya

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How we work and arrange our knowledge

This framework forms part of a body of documents that define how we work and how we arrange our knowledge, as shown below. For WaterAid staff, this framework and related documents can be found on our intranet page, KnowledgeNet, which is structured in the same way.

Our strategic aims	Sustainable services	Integration	Equality	Hygiene
Who we seek to serve	The poorest and most marginalised people			
What we work on	Water	Sanitation	Hygiene	
Cross-cutting principles	Human rights	Sustainability	Equality and inclusion	Partnership
Where we work	Large cities and towns	Small towns and growth centres	Rural and remote districts	Global and regional
How we bring about change	Our role and how we work			
	Systems strengthening and empowerment	WASH in other sectors	Hygiene behaviour change	
Project delivery concepts	Outline project delivery concepts			

The world is urbanising quickly. In many developing countries, inadequate planning and infrastructure investment without the support of robust institutions has created overcrowding, poor living conditions and increasing inequality. Higher population densities are making people more vulnerable to ill health and climate risks.

In our urban programming, we focus on building the capacity of municipalities and service providers to provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services to everyone, focusing on the poorest and most marginalised people.

This framework defines our position, approach and programme standards for urban WASH.



Front top: Julius Chisengo and Cleophas Shinga empty a pit latrine in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. WaterAid/Eliza Deacon.

Bottom: Rush hour in Morondava commune, Menabe region, Madagascar. WaterAid/Ernest Randriarimalala.

Back: Aregashe Addis in the water utility store where she works, Debre Tabor Water Utility, Amhara, Ethiopia. WaterAid/Behailu Shiferaw.

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