



Principles of Excellence in Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH)

Final Draft // June 2014

These principles express a commitment to implementing WASH services in a way that is distinctly informed by our Christian faith, and in keeping with the [Principles of Excellence in Integral Mission](#).

Our work will be characterized as excellent when...

1. We aim for long-term WASH services that deliver lasting benefits to all

Understanding the intrinsic value of each man, woman, and child as a being created in God's image, we work to serve *all* people—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or creed. Whole systems of individual, spiritual, structural, and relational barriers can keep communities trapped in poverty and disease. We seek to help communities address these barriers as they confront challenges in water, sanitation, and hygiene. Rather than focusing on one-off activities, we strive for WASH as lasting *services*—planning for quantity, quality, accessibility, and reliability. In order for WASH services to deliver lasting benefits, we must use techniques and technologies that are culturally relevant, transferable, and demonstrate care for the environment.

2. We nurture local ownership

WASH services should build on the good gifts that God has already placed within each community, and be driven by community demand. We will ensure that community members and local service providers are active in the planning and management of WASH services, and in defining "success." Formal community leaders have a central role, particularly in the long-term management of WASH services, but we must also take special care to include end users at all levels—particularly the very poor and socially marginalized. We should cultivate mutual accountability and transparency across all users as they develop plans for the ongoing management of WASH services.

3. We coordinate with partners

The long-term success of WASH services requires that we accept and honor the distinct roles of community members, implementing agencies, government agencies, donors, local churches, and others—collaboratively evaluating and articulating the commitments and expectations of all partners. We should support local partners and service providers in creating an environment that enables each community to operate and maintain their WASH services long-term (e.g. sources of replacement parts, curriculum, maintenance capability, supplier network, etc.), working in harmony with national policies and priorities. We seek to build the capacity of all stakeholders as we enter as guests, co-labor as partners, and continue as friends.

Believing that local churches are central to the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual development of communities, we seek to engage congregations through meaningful roles in the delivery of WASH services. Where there is no church, we will work to represent the global church in a faithful manner in bringing salt and light in the community.

4. We cultivate local financial sustainability

WASH services cost money to set up, but they also require ongoing funds for operation and maintenance, management support, and eventual replacement of water and sanitation infrastructure. In order to demonstrate good stewardship of God's resources and enable lasting impact, we commit to supporting financial plans that account for full life-cycle costs of community WASH services. Recurring costs can often be fully covered through realistic, affordable, and self-sustaining contributions from local users, but we also recognize that implementing agencies, institutions, or government agencies may bear a legitimate share of certain costs. In all cases, we cultivate an environment of transparency and accountability that ensures financial resources are utilized for their intended purposes.

5. We are thoughtful in our response to disasters

War, famine, natural disasters, and disease are devastating consequences of living in a fallen world. When disasters occur, we aim to expediently prevent disease and death by serving vulnerable people in their urgent needs for water, sanitation, and hygiene in ways that uphold human dignity and bring glory to God. With integrity and an eye toward long-term development, we commit to planning for the transition of WASH services from relief to recovery. We take a comprehensive and integrated approach to disasters and vulnerability, addressing disaster risk reduction, response, and advocacy. We work in harmony with other organizations, coordinating bodies, host nation agencies, and in line with sector standards and approaches (e.g., HAP¹ & Sphere² standards and UN Clusters³).

6. We are committed to constant learning and improvement

Without careful surveillance and continual improvement, our efforts will not result in lasting WASH service delivery and might even cause more harm than good. In light of this, we commit to supporting local communities, churches, and other authorities in measuring all that matters by establishing clear and achievable plans for monitoring services and systems for their intended life-cycles—which are often 10 years or more. In addition to measuring the outputs and outcomes of our own work, we systematically and regularly assess the ongoing impact of WASH services. We share what we learn in order to improve our approaches and to build accountability with one another, end users, and funders.

¹ Humanitarian Accountability Partnership: <http://www.hapinternational.org/standards.aspx> and <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/2010-hap-standard-in-accountability.pdf>

² Sphere: <http://www.spherehandbook.org/>

³ UN Cluster Approach <http://business.un.org/en/assets/39c87a78-fec9-402e-a434-2c355f24e4f4.pdf>

The Journey of the Principles of Excellence in WASH

Safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene is fundamental to human development and wellbeing. However, nearly a billion people do not use drinking water from improved sources, and 2.5 billion lack access to basic sanitation facilities⁴.

Incredible effort is being made to extend and sustain ongoing delivery of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services across the globe, and the WASH sector is growing and learning quickly. At the same time there is renewed interest in Integral Mission among Christian relief and development organizations and Christian mission agencies. In this rapidly shifting landscape, we believe that it is timely for Christian WASH practitioners to develop and share a set of principles for the excellent development of WASH services within in the context of integral Christian mission.

In the Fall of 2011, a diverse group of WASH practitioners representing various Christian relief and development organizations undertook a two-day collaboration at the Accord Summit on Excellence in WASH to identify the best examples of transformative work from the past and their collective vision for the future. A draft set of principles that characterize excellent practices within the WASH sector emerged from this effort.

November 2012: Participants at the 2012 Accord Summit on Excellence in WASH affirmed their desire to form the Accord WASH Alliance, a collaborative association of Christian WASH professionals and organizations. These individuals were presented with the draft *Principles of Excellence in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene* for review and comment.

December 2012: Accord Board of Directors officially adopted the *Principles of Excellence in Integral Mission*.

November 2013: A working group was formed to update and develop the *Principles of Excellence in WASH* in light of the new Integral Mission Principles.

June 2014: The WASH Alliance Steering Committee submitted a revised *Principles of Excellence in WASH* to the Accord Board of Directors for adoption and publication.

The Alliance offers the Principles as an aspirational statement to the broader WASH sector and to the Accord Network of Christian relief and development practitioners in the hope that it will encourage innovation and provide a helpful tool for review of operations and activities.

⁴ Several recent studies demonstrate that the global challenge is actually much bigger, particularly when accounting for water quality and reliability: estimates of people drinking unsafe water range from 1.8 to 1.9 billion, and perhaps 3.8 billion have difficulty getting regular access to safe water.