



We act early to save lives and restore dignity through provision of water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) services.

We support National Societies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies — using global tools, local capacities and technical expertise.

Building and maintaining WASH response capacity

Disasters and crises — whether natural or man-made — threaten health, dignity, and access to safe water and sanitation.

Without a strong, coordinated response, these emergencies can deepen inequality, increase vulnerability, and delay recovery. But with the right tools, skills, and partnerships, WASH in emergencies can protect lives and restore dignity.

The IFRC WASH Surge system empowers National Societies to respond quickly and effectively to crises by deploying skilled personnel, pre-positioned equipment, and technical support. We focus on rapid response, cost efficiency, and building long-term capacity in countries most affected by emergencies.

WASH in Emergencies: Our reach in numbers



100+
**Emergency
Appeal and DREF
operations¹
annually with a
WASH component**



400+
**WASH personnel
in IFRCs Rapid
Response Surge
pool**



1.98 million
**People supported
every year with WASH
activities during
emergency responses**



IFRC / Venezuelan Red Cross

Climate change is driving more frequent, severe, and complex disasters and epidemics.

As a result, the demand for water services in emergencies is rising - and delivering them is becoming increasingly challenging.

IFRC's WASH response: Our main objectives

- 1 Reduce health risks:** Provide rapid access to water, sanitation and hygiene promotion to reduce the risk of water related disease transmission and outbreaks.
- 2 Restore dignity:** Ensure reliable and equitable access to WASH services, enabling people to maintain hygiene and meet basic daily needs with dignity.

How we deliver WASH in emergencies

- ✓ Rapid assessment and rehabilitation of damaged WASH infrastructure
- ✓ Providing safe drinking water
- ✓ Building toilets and handwashing facilities
- ✓ Distributing hygiene items, including menstrual hygiene products
- ✓ Community engagement and hygiene promotion to prevent disease outbreaks
- ✓ Wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, drainage and vector control

Floods drive most of our WASH response



48%

of IFRC-led operations with a WASH component responded to floods (2015 to 2024). Floods are expected to grow in scale and frequency as climate change worsens.

Emergency response, lasting results



90%

of WASH infrastructure rehabilitated in Malawi was still working two years after the emergency. Rehabilitated through the Water Supply and Rehabilitation (WSR) ERU module.

What makes us different: Local action, Global reach

We are a partner that:



is a global organization, with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 192 countries



is present before, during and after disasters



is very often the first to respond to any disaster, from the small- to the large-scale



is an auxiliary body to government with privileged access to government



has a strong volunteer base, with more than 17 million volunteers worldwide, and is very well connected to communities



has access to a wide range of data and information available from our local networks



has technical expertise to complement local water and sanitation service providers



knows how to work in post-emergency settings, fragile states and complex settings.

The building blocks of WASH response capacity

To ensure that our WASH Surge support remains effective and ready for the future, we must embrace innovation while learning from what has worked on the ground. Building and sustaining emergency WASH response capacity relies on three essential building blocks — ones we have seen consistently drive impact in crises.

When response capacity fails, it is almost always because one of them has broken down. Strengthening all three building blocks is key to faster, more reliable response that protects health and dignity when it matters most.



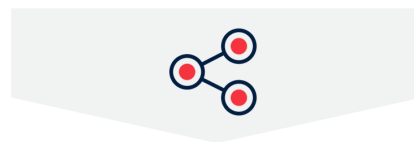
Human resources

WASH response relies on trained personnel who can act quickly and effectively. These teams depend on access to continuous training to stay prepared.



Equipment

Pre-positioned and maintained equipment is critical for rapid and effective WASH response. It supports personnel in delivering WASH services during emergencies.



Technical support

WASH technical advisors at national, regional and global levels ensure that human resources and equipment are available, trained, and maintained.



WASH in Emergencies: High Impact, High Return

WASH services in emergencies deliver system-wide benefits. Investments in WASH reduce morbidity and mortality of a wide array of diseases, lower healthcare costs, improve access to education and reduce the risk of gender-based violence.

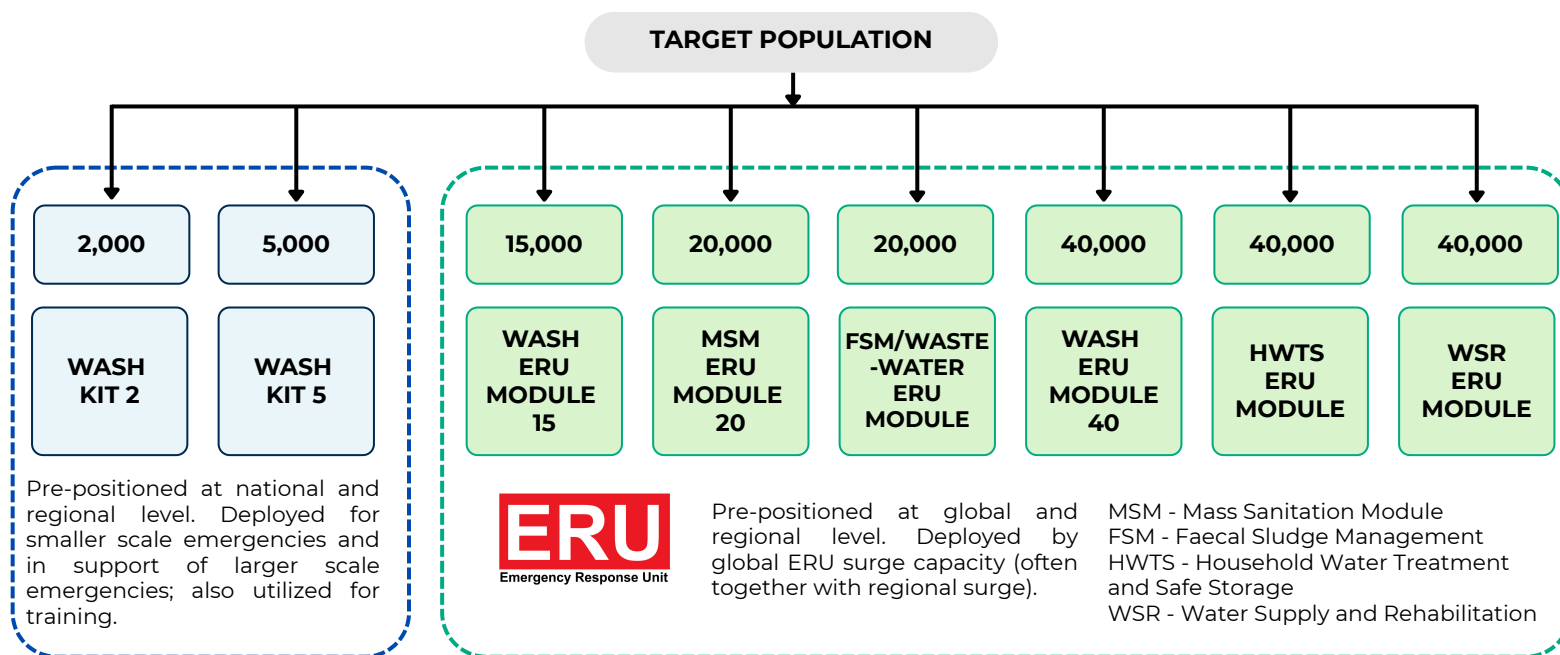
They also strengthen the resilience of communities and health systems, enabling facilities to maintain essential services during outbreaks, climate shocks and crises.

\$4.30

The estimated **return** through improved health outcomes and increase productivity, **for every dollar invested in WASH** (WHO, 2012).

IFRCs WASH Disaster Response Tools

The IFRC and its National Societies maintain a wide variety of WASH disaster response tools including standardized equipment packages and a pool of hundreds of trained WASH specialists. They cover a wide array of technical and language competencies and are available for rapid short and long-term deployment.



Full descriptions of ERUs and WASH Surge role profiles can be found in the IFRC Catalogue of Surge Services:

go.ifrc.org/surge/catalogue/wash (or use the QR code).



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