



WASH Working Group S. Syria - Amman

WASH Response Strategy

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The present strategy has been developed in a collegial way, and it is endorsed by the WASH working group for cross border humanitarian action in south Syria, Amman hub.

The membership of the group is confidential. For further information on the activities of the working group contact Roberto Saltori, rsaltori@unicef.org

General considerations on water supply in Syria

The focus should be on **supporting resilient systems**, capable of continuing to provide a predictable minimum service to users under extremely fluid situations.

When assessing the resilience of a water supply network, the following factors should be considered:

- **Security:** while a conflict is still ongoing, any investment on infrastructure repair can be damaged, anytime, by the protracted fighting.
 - Until the security is restored, long term investments, both on infrastructure and governance systems, are very high risk.
 - Small-scale investments in a large number of small water vendors are intrinsically less vulnerable.
- **Technical sustainability:** the more modern and integrated the system, the more dependent it is on a sophisticated operation and maintenance organization (i.e. the Water Board, or water utility). Such an organization must be capable of effectively mobilizing resources, technical capacity and supplies, as well as have physical access to the system.
 - Efficient utilities can maintain a system serving a large number of people
 - Inefficient utilities will render a system ineffective in a short time
 - Small, community level or private systems are simpler to maintain, and do not require specialized expertise.
- **Economic efficiency:** economies of scale are reached only when the systems can operate as planned (i.e. availability of uninterrupted cheap electricity).
 - A large system can guarantee low unit costs
 - A small private vendor has higher unit costs
 - Systems operating in emergency mode (i.e. generators, inefficient repairs) can be far more expensive than private, small scale supply.
- **Flexibility:** in Syria over 50% of the population has been displaced over time.
 - Large schemes are static, and designed for a given reference population.
 - Small water vendors can reach virtually anywhere, and adapt to shifting clientele
- **Financial viability:** any system, public or private, has running costs that need to be met. Capacity and willingness to pay (related to general economic conditions) must be known and factored in before deciding on investments.
 - Inefficient billing systems do not result in disconnection of defaulting debtors: they result in progressive degradation services for all, and thus decreased recovery rate, further degradation of services, and finally, interruption of the service altogether.
 - Private supply is intrinsically sustainable, as it is paid-at-delivery, and not billed post-delivery.
- **Overall sustainability:** experience from all development contexts proved that systems too sophisticated in comparison with the overall political and economic conditions in which they are intended to operate, invariably, fail. Such “environmental conditions” must be carefully analyzed before making a decision on the investment. In conditions where there the central government,

or centralized organizations, have limited capacity and resources, the gaps are spontaneously filled by the private sector, highly flexible, and demand-based. Users provided with unsatisfactory piped supply turn to private vendors for their needs.

There are, therefore, two possible strategies:

1. Support to large, centralized water supply systems

- Repairs can be an efficient way of protecting an infrastructure of large value
- Requires large one-off investments, and large human resources in the field
- Can reach large numbers of users in one go

But also:

- Might need cross line arrangements between conflicting parties
- Might be used as weapon of war
- Not flexible for mobile populations
- Complex systems are subject to potentially catastrophic failures,
- Might require expensive, protracted operational support to continue to operate, if they are not self-sustainable

2. Support to the private sector and influence over market dynamics

- The private sector is intrinsically flexible, demand-driven, and capable to operate in virtually any situation.
- Small scale water systems are technically simpler to maintain.
- It is intrinsically sustainable (the more you consume, the more you pay)
- Cannot be used as weapon of war
- Can be sustained with limited direct field presence
- Market support is not limited to only water supply, but can also be extended to hygiene items, thus achieving a more comprehensive support

But also:

- Expensive for the users, as water must be paid upfront
- Equal cost, but non equitable
- The quality of the product is difficult to monitor: therefore the responsibility for water quality shifts to household level.

In principle, both strategies have positive and negative aspects: the choice of which to adopt is therefore contextual.

In the presence of security, an efficient government and control of the territory, as well as having sufficient economic resources available, the support to large schemes has a lot of advantages. However, in absence of all the above factors, the private sector is possibly the only channel to effectively reach users in marginal conditions.

A careful assessment of the situation is therefore needed before taking a decision.

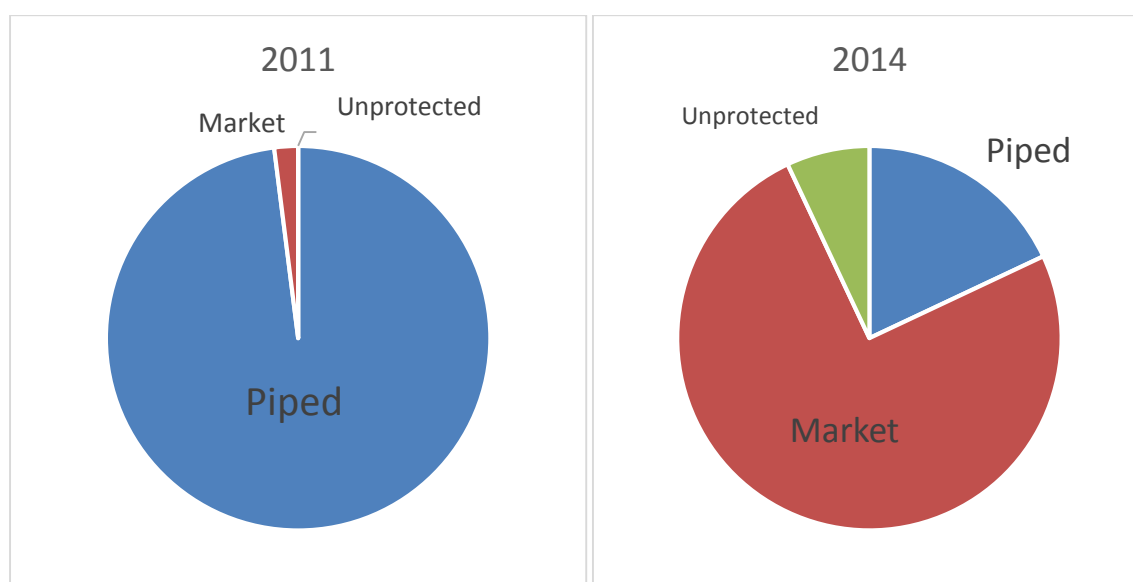
WASH Situation Analysis and Response Strategy

Assessments in south Syria have been conducted by different partners, and with different methodologies. The main results have been summarized in a separate paper produced by the WASH working group. Such consolidated assessment is updated on a regular base, as new information becomes available. The findings available in December identified the following situation:

Water Supply

Situation

- The centralized water supply is in good condition, but its operation is erratic (around 20-25% uptime), mainly because of energy availability and costs
- The potential of the existing centralized infrastructures is conditional to power sources coming from cross-line locations, and conditional to cross-line beneficiaries benefitting from it, and therefore dependent from the evolution of the conflict
- Not only Diesel is a restricted item, but the full supply to run the existing systems would exceed the 1 MUSD/month, at Jordanian costs.
- A large majority of the users in opposition controlled Dar'a turned to water vendors for their needs.
- According to the best estimates available, the water consumption at the present moment seems to be between 20 and 40 liters/capita-day, down from (120-150) prior the conflict.
- Water supply can be unreliable, with interruptions of services that can also be protracted in time



Source of Water in Dar'a District – change from before the conflict and end 2014

- The local cost of fuel increased 200%, and the cost of water 98% in 2014. Water can represent up to half of the non-food expenditures of households.

Response strategy

The strategy on water supply recognizes the limits to the support to centralized infrastructures, and therefore includes support to smaller, decentralized systems in a logic of management of market dynamics, and minimization of the inequalities coming from a market-based supply.

- The repair and/or augmentation of public water infrastructure damaged by the conflict or required to serve evolving needs, should be, strictly, subject to availability of technical and financial capacity to maintain and operate infrastructure
- The sustainability of energy sources necessary to power water supply systems should always be considered when selecting any intervention. Alternative power supply sources should be explored as far as possible.
- Where support to a centralized system is not deemed sustainable or appropriate, the interventions should be focused on sustaining and increasing water supply run by small communities, or privately owned / community used, including private businesses.
- On the supply side, interventions that will include support to smaller scale water supply and distribution systems (e.g. wells equipped with solar pumps and water trucks) should aim at increasing availability, efficiency, overall reliability, predictability of supply and possibly price stabilization.
- On the demand side, provision of additional water storage can help to mitigate the service unreliability and short term price fluctuations.
- Water tankering, water voucher programs and other subsidies can also be considered, should aim at compensate inequality of access to the private market, and therefore should be carefully targeted to most vulnerable, possibly linked to market monitoring, and have a clear exit strategy.

Water Quality:

Situation

- Water sources used by the informal private sector are not exclusively protected sources
- There is no evidence that water is purified before being put on the market
- There no is water surveillance system in place, nor authorities with capacity to undertake the role
- Authorities running centralized systems does not have access to water treatment supplies

Response Strategy

Water quality interventions will aim at both water treatment, and water quality surveillance, recognizing that the collapse of centralized systems requires de-centralized, bottom up strategies:

- Alongside the support to centralized systems via procurement of consumables, equipment, household level strategies should be prioritized
- Preference should be given to low cost, scalable, household water treatment methods of proven effectiveness in emergency contexts, that does not require the establishment of new supplies chains
- Household strategies should not be limited to provision of supplies but should include empowerment of the users for the management of the water quality

- Water surveillance should be focused on risk management rather than support to centralized laboratories
- Water surveillance strategies should be developed, working with both water vendors and at community level, prioritizing risk management strategies (i.e. water safety plans, sanitary inspections)

Sanitation

Situation

- The most common types of toilets flush to a piped sewer system (49%) or a septic system (18%).
- The majority of sewers that are being used by flushing toilets in households connected to the pre-existing sewer network are emptying into surface water resources
- Lack of water for flushing was most commonly cited as the reason for toilets not working rather than physical damage to the system
- Collective centers and schools in particular reports lack of satisfactory sanitation facilities altogether
- Cost of desludging has risen significantly, due to both lack of desludging suppliers, and cost of fuel
- The reduced capacity at municipality level is also reflected in the collapse of solid waste management collection and disposal

Response strategy

The spilling of excreta in the environment should be minimized at all costs: interventions might include:

- Quick impact projects on repair of sewage lines or clearing of clogging (common, given the lack of sufficient water for flushing)
- Support on provision of desludging services, including support to the private sector when appropriate
- Construction of latrines in collective centers, schools and public spaces
- Construction of small village or community level wastewater treatment systems

Strategies for municipal waste management based on community mobilization, should be prioritized over support to centralized systems and large equipment (i.e. large trucks)

- Cash for work, can also be considered as solution for solid waste management: as this will also increase the spending capacity of families, should be considered a subsidy, and as such be conditional to the same targeting of any other subsidy

Household hygiene:

Situation

- Hygiene items are generally available on the local market: however their use, especially sanitary pads and baby diapers, is reduced due to their cost and the economic conditions of the families. Baby feces management is perceived as a problem.

- Knowledge of common hygiene practices like use of toilets and hand washing is widespread

Response Strategy

The strategy around hygiene recognizes that Syrians are already highly educated on hygiene practices, and that the distributions of hygiene items is, in fact, a subsidy that can help in offsetting scarce household resources

- Recently displaced families should be particularly targeted for distributions of hygiene items.
- Distributions of hygiene items to host families should also include residents to minimize the risk of tensions.
- General distributions of hygiene items should be considered a form of subsidy, and therefore carefully targeted and linked to market monitoring.
- Distributions should always include post distribution monitoring.
- Community mobilization targeted to hygiene, should rather prioritize diarrhea, water treatment and conservation and risk management, environmental sanitation, rather than more traditional HP packages developed for other regions.

Capacity building

Situation

- Limited number of actors, and even more limited specific WASH capacity is present in S.Syria
- Access is extremely limited in the south, and Syrian staff cannot easily be trained in Jordan

Response strategy

- Remote methods like videos, skype, and web based teleconferencing helps but have limits
- Every potential opportunity for capacity building of local capacity should be proactively explored and exploited
- Use Remote management technology should be applied as feasible
- It is recognized that the scale up of the partnership base, and capacity to carry out humanitarian action in South Syria will be gradual

Need assessment

- In accordance with the SIMAWAG strategy, all partners will include a commonly agreed set of key questions in their property assessment and commits to share that data at level of coordination.
- Market availability and price of water and key hygiene items will be monitored on a monthly base

Hub Coordination and Contribution to Whole of Syria

The partners involved in the cross border response in South Syria coordinate their interventions through the Amman WASH Working Group

The Working Group collect information from partners on a strictly confidential base, and shares only agreed, anonymized products to the public domain. The WG promotes common situation analysis, strategizing, planning (including contingency planning) and monitoring of interventions in S.Syria.

The WASH working group in Amman is also committed, and is actively contributing, to the Whole of Syria coordination system. This includes active contribution to the Humanitarian Monitoring system, financial tracking, Humanitarian Need Overview, Syria Response Plan, and all other WoS tools, both inter-sector and internal WASH.

Particular attention is given to inter-hub joint planning and coordination for all activities that takes places in those localities where the access is possible from multiple hubs.

Gender and Protection

Jordan cross-border WASH actors will aim to ensure that all WASH activities prioritize the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys; and that protection is mainstreamed throughout WASH interventions. Equity in access to WASH services and goods is also of the utmost concern to the WASH Working Group, and actors will identify strategies to ensure that those who are most vulnerable are able to access and benefit from WASH interventions. To achieve this, opportunities should be created for women, men, boys and girls to provide input into program activities, and actors should ensure the involvement of women and adolescent (boys and girls) in decision making and leadership in committees and in feedback (monitoring) mechanisms. Vulnerable households, including those headed by women and children, should be prioritized as beneficiaries, and technical activities should be designed to ensure their safety and security. To ensure that the concerns of all population groups receive adequate consideration, WASH actors and their implementing partners should also promote the engagement of women as program staff/enumerators inside Syria where and how appropriate, in order to facilitate interaction with female community members and beneficiaries. To support local implementing partners to apply gender-sensitive and protection-oriented approaches, WASH actors in Jordan will also aim to provide relevant trainings and coaching to their partners and staff inside Syria.

Whenever possible, disaggregated information will be gathered from women, girls, boys and men about their basic needs, cultural beliefs and practices related to water and sanitation. This information can then be fed back to the working group to provide WASH actors with an opportunity to collectively review their programmatic approaches and ensure that gender and protection have been properly considered.

Accountability

To ensure high quality, responsive and relevant programming, members of the WASH Working Group and their local partners will work towards establishing a variety of accountability mechanisms. The following approaches will be prioritized:

- Beneficiary feedback mechanisms
- Complaints and Response Mechanism (CRM)
- Monitoring – both directly and through third parties
- Broad participation
- Transparency