Emergency Sanitation Standards

28 March 2023

Key points

- Interpret indicators with care when population size fluctuates significantly.
- When calculating sanitation-related indicators, clarify whether population figures include or exclude the host community.
- Information on reported defecation in toilets or open defecation observations can be compared with this indicator. If the number of people per toilet is high, this may indicate that the problem may lie in insufficient toilets. If there are sufficient toilets, it can indicate that people are not using them.

1. Overview

Safe excreta disposal is an essential element of any WASH programme, because it helps to reduce direct and indirect disease transmission. To improve safe access to sanitation it is necessary to meet standards of privacy and safety using sanitation structures that are locally or culturally acceptable. The 2018 Sphere manual specifies: "Household toilets are considered the ideal in terms of user safety, security, convenience and dignity and the demonstrated links between ownership and maintenance […] communal or shared toilets can be designed and built with the aim of ensuring household toilets in the future". Providing equal access to sanitation can be achieved through the distribution of sanitation infrastructure or cash-for-latrine programming and proper monitoring.

Programme monitoring should use the UNHCR WASH standards and indicators from the UNHCR WASH manual, and UNHCR's WASH Monitoring System (WMS).

Standard / indicators

The main excreta disposal standards, defined by Sphere, have been endorsed by UNHCR.
- Environment free from human excreta: All excreta is safely contained on-site to avoid contamination of the natural, living, learning, working and communal environments.
- Access to and use of toilets: People have adequate, appropriate and acceptable toilets to allow for rapid, safe and secure access at all times.
- Management and maintenance of excreta collection, transport, disposal and treatment: Excreta management facilities, infrastructure and systems are safely managed and maintained to ensure service provision and minimum impact on the surrounding environment.

**UNHCR sanitation-related indicators in emergencies and post-emergency situations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Output Objective</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Out of Camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refugees have safe access to quality sanitation.</td>
<td>Number of persons per toilet/latrine</td>
<td># of Persons</td>
<td>&lt;=50</td>
<td>&lt;=20 (aiming for 1 latrine/household as soon as possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population lives in satisfactory conditions of sanitation and hygiene.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Households reporting defecating in a toilet.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>&gt;=60</td>
<td>&gt;=85</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Households with a household toilet/latrine.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&gt;=85</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Schools: Pupils per toilet/latrine.</td>
<td># of Persons</td>
<td>50 (30 girls per toilet, 60 boys per toilet – add urinals for boys)</td>
<td>50 (30 girls per toilet, 60 boys per toilet – add urinals for boys)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health centres</td>
<td># of Persons</td>
<td>20 outpatients per toilet/latrine</td>
<td>10 inpatients per toilet/latrine</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Main guidance

### Emergency standard

- Persons per toilet or latrine. No latrine should be used by more than 50 persons during the first phase of an emergency. The count is made per drophole. Only latrines that are cleanable, guarantee privacy and are structurally safe should be counted. Latrines that are full or do not comply with UNHCR standards should not be counted.

The indicator can be reported in a Refugee WASH sector situation report (sitrep) every week, or in the frequency that sitreps are produced by the emergency operation. In addition, the indicator shall be reported once a month through the emergency form of the WASH monitoring system.

As soon as possible after the onset of an emergency

- Households who report defecating in a toilet. At least 60% of households should report that they defecate in a toilet. The principles, definitions and recommendations with respect to this indicator apply to both emergencies and post-emergency situations. In an emergency situation, this indicator can be obtained by conducting a rapid WASH assessment.

In out of camp situations (settlements and dispersed or scattered rural and urban locations), use UNHCR standards as a guidance for emergency response and work with local authorities towards achieving national standards and sanitation national targets derived from the Sustainable Development Goals. Advocate for the right to sanitation, which is a human right.

### Longer-term standard

The following sanitation standards apply to post-emergency situations and should be monitored once a month through the monthly report card (access indicators) or once a year (household indicators) through an annual household survey also known as “WASH KAP (knowledge, attitude
and practices) survey”. WASH actors should aim to carry out an initial KAP baseline survey survey within the first 6 months of the emergency and at least once a year (ideally twice a year if there are distinct rainy and dry seasons). A set of tools is available to plan and conduct the survey, as well as tools for easy data analysis at: http://wash.unhcr.org/wash-monitoring-system/wash-kap-survey-modules/.

More information about the monitoring requirements of these indicators can be found in the UNHCR WASH manual or on the UNHCR WASH website.

- Persons per toilet or latrine. No toilet should be used by more than 20 persons. The count is made per drophole. Only latrines that are cleanable, guarantee privacy and are structurally safe should be counted. Latrines that are full or do not comply with UNHCR Standards should not be counted. The objective should be to achieve 1 latrine per household (maximum 6 people).
- Households who defecate in a toilet. At least 85% of households should report that they defecate in a toilet. The principles, definitions and recommendations with respect to this indicator apply to both emergencies and post-emergency situations. In a post-emergency situation, this indicator can be obtained through an annual household survey.
- Households with a household toilet/ latrine. At least 85% of households should have access to household toilets/latrines. Schools and health facilities with compliant WASH structures. Schools should provide 1 toilet for every 30 girls and 1 toilet for every 60 boys. Health centres should provide 1 toilet for every 20 users in in-patient departments (IPDs) and 1 latrine each for staff, females, males, and children in out-patient departments (OPDs).

In out of camp situations (settlements and dispersed or scattered rural and urban locations), use UNHCR standards as a guidance for emergency response and work with local authorities towards achieving national standards and sanitation national targets derived from the Sustainable Development Goals. Advocate for the right to sanitation, which is a human right. The telephone-based health access utilization survey (HAUS) for out-of-camp settings also includes a WASH module that can be used to understand the WASH situation in out-of-camp settings.

**Annexes**

Sphere Handbook (2018)

**3. Links**

4. Main contacts

Contact DRS/PH Section. At: HQWASH@unhcr.org.