

The WASH Sustainability Charter

PREAMBLE

We, the undersigned, believe:

- That the lasting provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene education (WASH) is a leading development priority of our time. Around the world, almost one billion people live without access to improved water sources, while 2.6 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation facilities;
- That the lasting provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene education is key to sustaining human health, education, and economic development, empowering women, and maintaining ecosystems that support all life;
- That sustainability requires the development of meaningful partnerships that recognize the diverse roles of all actors, including communities, governments, donors, implementers, and all other stakeholders.
- That our efforts to promote ongoing safe water, sanitation, and hygiene education are critical to the stability and development of communities around the world and can end the needless suffering and premature death of men, women, and children due to waterborne illness;
- That there are still enormous systemic challenges to providing sustainable safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services in many countries. Most critically, many of those who may have benefited in the short-term from WASH projects now have systems that are not working adequately, or have failed completely.
- **That the premature failure of these solutions is unacceptable.**

The first steps in partnering to address these systemic challenges are to build on our successes, learn from our failures, and agree on a shared vision of sustainable WASH services regardless of one's role or perspective. Specifically, WASH should be viewed in the developing world as it is in the developed world – as a service, not as a project.

Together, we propose to advance sustainable solutionsⁱ in water, sanitation, and hygiene education through the following mission and guiding principles. These are intended to serve as a common framework that stakeholdersⁱⁱ in the sector can agree upon when collaborating with communities in pursuit of these basic servicesⁱⁱⁱ around the world.

MISSION

To collaboratively promote the delivery of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services that produce high-quality, lasting benefits to consumers.

PURPOSE

This Charter seeks to align WASH stakeholders around collaboratively developed sustainability principles and catalyze adoption of these principles around the world. In recognition of the many approaches to achieving each principle, the Charter provides a framework for the development of corresponding best practices and metrics to facilitate ongoing learning. In this way, the Charter provides guidance without prescribing specific practices.

Those endorsing this Charter will strive to incorporate these principles and actively promote WASH sustainability throughout their work. **The Charter is an aspirational document, not a governing one.** Endorsers agree to pursue the mission and strive towards the principles incorporated in the Charter. It is intended that WASH stakeholders will encourage and assist each other in applying the Charter's principles, and ultimately, in improving the sustainability of WASH services around the world.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This mission will be enabled by guiding principles in the areas of:

- Strategy and Planning
- Governance and Accountability
- Service Delivery Support
- Financial Management
- Reporting and Knowledge-Sharing

Strategy and Planning

In order to ensure that WASH services are properly planned, designed for long-term operation, and coordinated with the local community and other stakeholders, we will:

- Consider solutions that are equitable, environmentally-friendly, and well-suited to the specific needs and long-term operations and maintenance capabilities of the local community.
- Align planning efforts with other stakeholders, including development organizations and national/local governments.
- Meaningfully include consumers and other stakeholders throughout the planning and budgeting processes.
- Assess full life-cycle^{iv} risks during planning and develop appropriate risk mitigation strategies.
- Consider the long-term education, capacity-building, and training needs of stakeholders.

Governance and Accountability

In order to ensure effective management of resources and communication amongst stakeholders, we will:

- Clearly articulate and document roles, responsibilities, commitments, and expectations of all stakeholders, especially communities and governments, while recognizing the central role of women in WASH solutions.
- Promote and deliver programs where all stakeholders are accountable to each other and operate in a transparent manner.
- Collaboratively evaluate the capabilities and capacity of the consumers, community, and service providers when determining roles in ongoing service delivery.

Service Delivery Support

In order to ensure that an operational infrastructure is in place to meet ongoing service delivery needs, we will:

- Develop and promote a local operational infrastructure (e.g. replacement parts, curriculum, maintenance capability, supplier network, etc.) that enables long-term service delivery.
- Prepare the consumers and/or other stakeholders to take responsibility for the service delivery support processes.
- Establish mechanisms to educate stakeholders and to ensure that education transmission is sustained over time.

Financial Management

In order to ensure that capital is available to meet the full life-cycle costs associated with ongoing service delivery, we will:

- Utilize financial resources for their intended purposes, as agreed-upon by all stakeholders, throughout the service delivery life-cycle.
- Establish a long-term financing plan that realistically accounts for all phases of the service delivery life-cycle.

Reporting and Knowledge-Sharing

In order to ensure timely identification of service delivery challenges and to continuously improve our efforts, we will:

- Utilize appropriate and consistent metrics, evaluation criteria, and tools to monitor and measure performance relative to long-term service delivery throughout the solution life-cycle (including post-implementation phases).
- Share data and lessons learned - both from failures and successes - in order to provide continuous improvement throughout the sector.
- Adopt and use consistent financial and operational reporting frameworks.

ORIGIN OF THE WASH SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER

The WASH Sustainability Charter was created to produce a common statement of values and principles for sustainable solutions that address safe water, sanitation, and hygiene education issues across the globe. This document was developed through a process of consultation with stakeholders and organizations that are key players in the WASH sector. For more information, please visit www.WASHcharter.org.

ENDORSEMENT

By signing this Charter, we agree to pursue the mission and strive towards the principles incorporated herein, thereby leading the sector toward a vision of WASH as a sustainable service.

Endnotes

ⁱ **Solutions** – Refers to the system or approach used to improve the delivery of water, sanitation, and hygiene in a particular geographic area.

ⁱⁱ **Stakeholders** – Refers to a collective group of individuals (e.g. consumers), organizations (e.g. donors, NGOs, implementers, corporations), and other entities (e.g. local and national governments, private sector actors, ministries of health, etc.) that have an interest or stake in the delivery of WASH services for a particular geographic area.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Services** – Refers to the ongoing delivery of WASH solutions in a particular geographic area. Often this term is used in contrast with projects/programs, with emphasis on the implementation of temporary WASH solutions (often interventions) for a specific community or geographic area.

^{iv} **Life-Cycle** – Refers to all stages of a WASH service improvement, from the preliminary needs assessment through the post-implementation period.