



WASH Cluster
Water Sanitation Hygiene

Country Report: Colombia

Assessment of different levels of WASH Coordination in Humanitarian Emergencies

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WASH Cluster
Water Sanitation Hygiene



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Abbreviations

AA	Anticipatory action	IM	Information management
AAP	Accountability to affected populations	KII	Key informant interview
BA	Basic Assumption	GWC	Global WASH Cluster
CA	Core Action	MR	Minimum Requirement
CAR	Central African Republic	M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
CAST	Cluster Advocacy and Support Team	NCP	National coordination platform
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency	ToC	Theory of Change
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan	WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Executive Summary

A key component of effective humanitarian response is coordination, which aims to establish a coherent and complementary approach between humanitarian actors for better collective results. To assess the value-add of WASH coordination in humanitarian emergencies and the completion of the 6+1 Humanitarian Core Functions for different coordination levels, five context-specific evaluations were completed over a 6-month period to collect information on activities, outcomes, and impacts from WASH coordination platform staff (via the completion of monthly activity reports and key-informant interviews), WASH coordination partners (via key-informant interviews), and anyone self-defining as being involved in the WASH response (via an online survey).

Colombia was selected in partnership with the Global WASH Cluster and the national WASH coordination platform staff to account for differences in coordination levels. From November 2022 to June 2023, we collected information from:

- 1 one monthly activity report from Cluster staff;
- 2 three key-informant interviews with the WASH Cluster staff; and
- 3 17 key-informant interviews with partners.

According to staff and partners, the activities the most completed by the WASH coordination platform in Colombia were:

- 1 Basic coordination to support delivery, including meeting and communication with information sharing platforms;
- 2 to ease the communication and dialogue with the government; and,
- 3 to collect and analyze data on response activity to produce several information products.

With those actions, informants agreed to say the WASH coordination platform helped partners to make strategic decisions, identify the gaps in the response, and strengthen stakeholders' relationships. These outcomes impacted the WASH response by providing a more effective response and giving more visibility to the WASH sector.

However, staff and partners provided recommendations to improve the WASH coordination platform in Colombia, including:

- 1 to review the strategic documents (workplan, standards, etc.) to standardize the WASH response;
- 2 to continue to advocate with the government to increase the visibility, interactions, and flexibility with the government; and,
- 3 to work on the Nexus and work on a more sustainable response.

Overall, this study collected rich context-specific details on the WASH coordination platform in Colombia to inform WASH stakeholders on the value of the WASH coordination and efforts to complete the 6+1 Core Function, to ultimately benefit WASH partners and affected populations. These results will be compared with four other contexts to establish the value-add of coordination levels for WASH coordination platforms.

Introduction

Coordination is a key component of effective humanitarian response, with the aim to establish a coherent and complementary approach between humanitarian actors for better collective results. The Cluster approach was developed to bring together relevant stakeholders, to ultimately increase efficiency in humanitarian response. The Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster has been established, as well as ten other sectoral Clusters.

At the country level, the 6+1 Core Functions of a Cluster/Coordination Platform are to¹:

- 1 Support service delivery;
- 2 Inform the Humanitarian Coordinator/Humanitarian Country Team's strategic decision-making;
- 3 Plan and implement cluster strategies;
- 4 Monitor and evaluate performance;
- 5 Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning; and,
- 6 Support robust advocacy;

while also ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations.

To complete those Core Functions, the coordination platform at the national and sub-national level is facilitated by a coordination platform staff. While the staffing varies by emergency context it usually includes a national Coordinator and an Information Manager. The role of the Coordinator is to facilitate improved coordination and equal partnerships between all actors involved in the WASH response. The Information Manager collects, stores, analyzes, and shares data with stakeholders to provide an evidence-based, transparent basis for decision-making². Depending on the country's size and level of WASH needs, the coordination can be further divided into sub-national coordination platforms which can also have Coordinators and Information Managers. The number of sub-levels depends on the geography and the level of decentralization needed in each context, and sometimes include dedicated staff (focused on coordination) or double-hatted staff (working concurrent jobs).

The minimum composition of the coordination platform staff³ (number of persons, dedicated position, and contract type) depends on several criteria such as: the emergency response level, and the number of sub-national coordination and partners in-country. Despite those minimum recommendations, not all coordination platforms are fully-staffed or positions are not all dedicated.

The coordination platform operate as a partnership of national and international response organizations, host government(s), donors, relevant stakeholders, and other humanitarian coordination platforms. Partners commit⁴ to regularly contribute to key cluster core functions (Strategic Advisory Group, Technical Working Groups, sub-national) and participate in common assessments, coordination meetings, strategic planning and reporting.

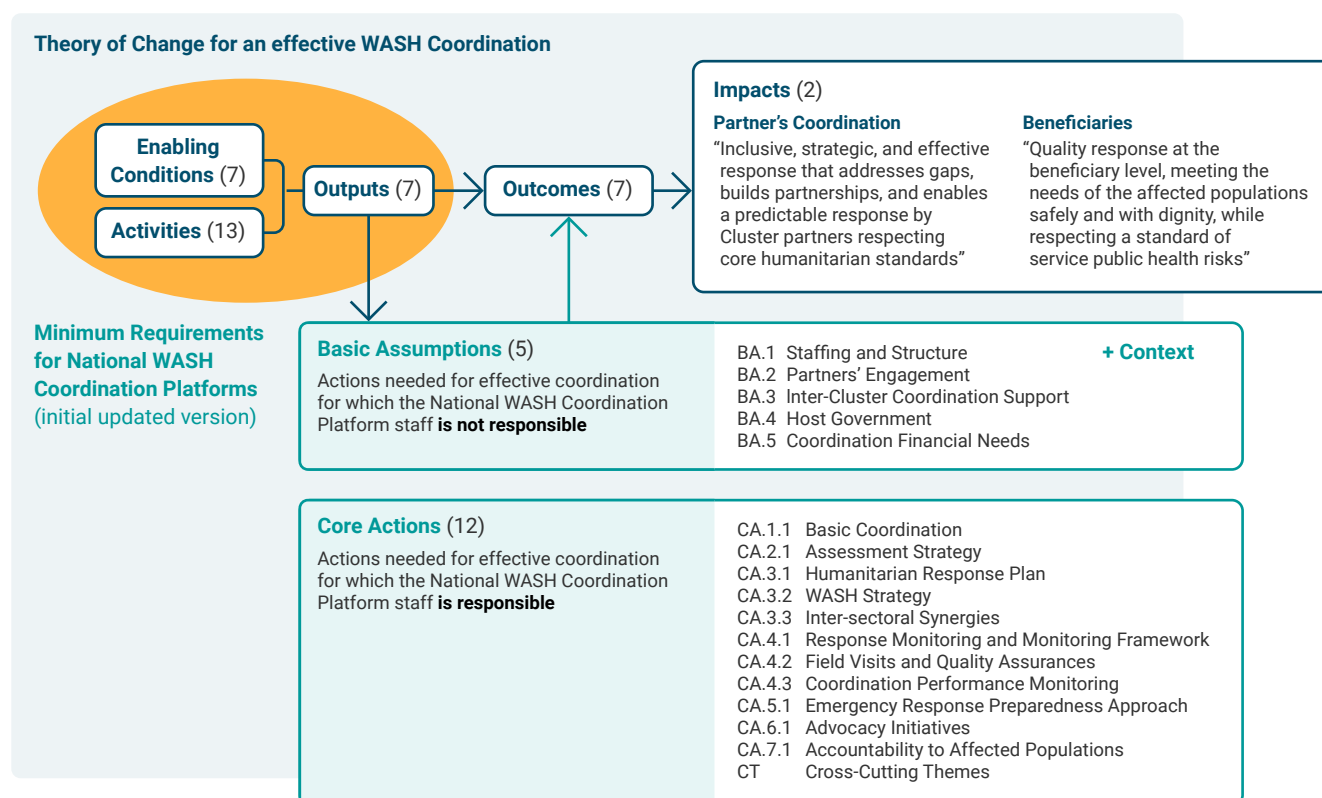
Over the past four years, Tufts University and UNICEF have collaborated to complete research to understand the value-add of WASH Coordination in Emergencies.

The first piece of research⁵ summarized the outcomes and impacts of WASH coordination in humanitarian response by collating information from the literature, UNICEF documents, and UNICEF key informant interviews. The results were used to develop a Theory of Change for the WASH coordination to explain how activities conducted by the WASH coordination platform should produce a series of outputs, outcomes, and impacts that contribute to achieving the intended impact on partners and affected populations (Figure 1).

- 1 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). *Guidance: Cluster Coordination at Country Level*; 2015. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2020-11/Reference%20Module%20for%20Cluster%20Coordination%20at%20Country%20Level%20%28revised%20July%202015%29.pdf> (accessed 2022-08-22).
- 2 Price, G. WASH Cluster Coordination Handbook, 2009. https://www.susana.org/_resources/documents/default/3-4213-7-1617720285.pdf.
- 3 UNICEF. Recommended Good Practices for the Minimum Structure of Coordination Teams at Country Level for UNICEF as a Cluster Lead Agency, 2021. <https://www.nutritioncluster.net/sites/nutritioncluster.com/files/2021-11/Human%20Resources%20Decision%20Tree.pdf>.
- 4 GWC (Global WASH Cluster). *Global WASH Cluster: Minimum Requirements for National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platforms*; 2023. <https://washcluster.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/CTK/pages/10787765/Coordination+platform?preview=/10787765/2397077505/GWC%20MRs%20for%20coordination%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed 2023-09-19).
- 5 Yates, T.; Zannat, H.; Khandaker, N.; Portea, D.; Bouvet, F.; Lantagne, D. Evidence Summary of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Coordination in Humanitarian Response. *Disasters* 2021, 45 (4), 913–938. <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12463>.

This Theory of Change was strengthened in a second piece of collaborative research by Tufts and UNICEF⁶. Key-informant interviews and surveys with WASH coordination platform staff and partners in three contexts (Cox's Bazar Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Yemen) were conducted to consider the perspective of direct stakeholders. The results of this work identified a key set of tools, activities, and products that assisted partners to reach humanitarian WASH outcomes. Identified key contextual factors enabling outcomes were: having a stable staff, cooperation with partners, and context-specific tools. Additional activities, outcomes, and enabling conditions for effective coordination were identified as critical for effective WASH coordination and were added to the Theory of Change (Appendix A).

Figure 1
Development of the Theory of Change and the initial updated version of the Minimum Requirements to achieve and assess the intended impact on partners and affected populations. The Theory of Change was used to update the Minimum Requirements.



⁶ Heylen, C.; Yates, T.; Topper, L.; Bouvet, F.; Porteaud, D.; Ramos, M.; McCluskey, J.; Lantagne, D. Realtime Assessment of WASH Coordination in Three Humanitarian Emergencies. *PLOS Water* 2022, 1 (11), e0000047. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pwat.0000047>.

⁷ Previous version of the Minimum Requirements: GWC (Global WASH Cluster). *Global WASH Cluster: Minimum Requirements for National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platforms*; 2017. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-wash-cluster-minimum-requirements-nationalhumanitarian-wash-coordination> (accessed 2022-08-22).

The Minimum Requirements can be used as a guide for national coordination platform and are complementary to the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) survey and workshop, which is a country-led exercise to assess the Cluster's performance against the Core Functions completed by partners and staff.

In this third research collaboration between Tufts University and UNICEF, we aim to assess the outcomes and impacts of WASH coordination platforms with different coordination levels. This is to establish the value-add of well-staffed WASH coordination in humanitarian emergencies.

I think the products developed by the Cluster help identify both the gaps that exist compared to planned funding, activities, or implementation, and track how the Cluster is evolving at the national level.

Partner informant



Methods

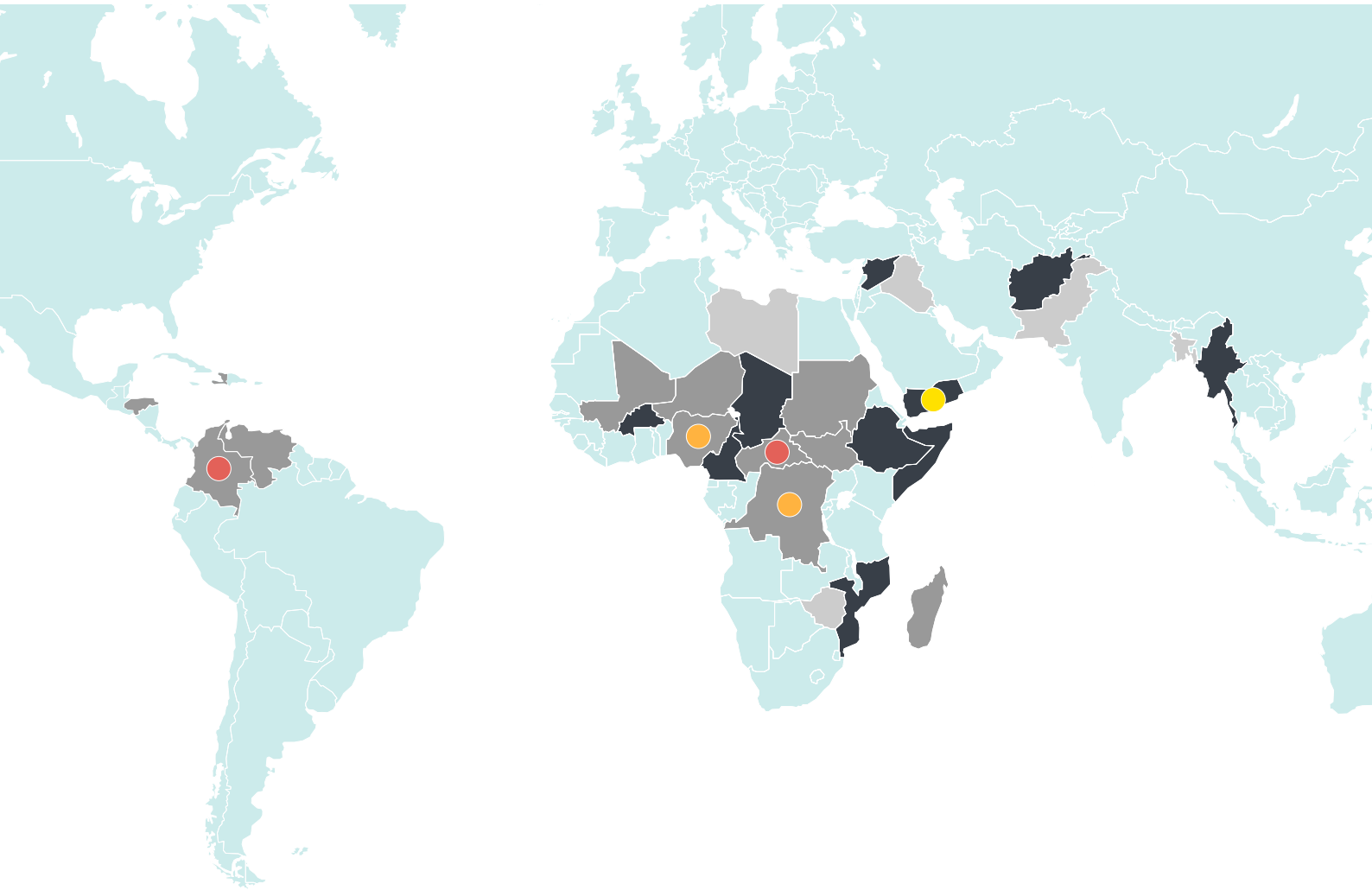
This work was approved by the Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research Institutional Review Board (SBER IRB) at Tufts University (STUDY00002894). No local ethics approval was needed, as all human-subject interactions were conducted remotely.

Five contexts were selected in collaboration with the Global WASH Cluster (GWC) to represent different humanitarian WASH coordination levels at the time of the study (**Figure 2**), including: Colombia and Central African Republic (low-staffed); Democratic Republic of the Congo and Northeast Nigeria (medium-staffed); and Yemen (high-staffed).

Figure 2
Selected contexts for this study with coordination level and WASH Coordination priority

● low-staffed	● high priority
● medium-staffed	● medium priority
● high-staffed	● low priority

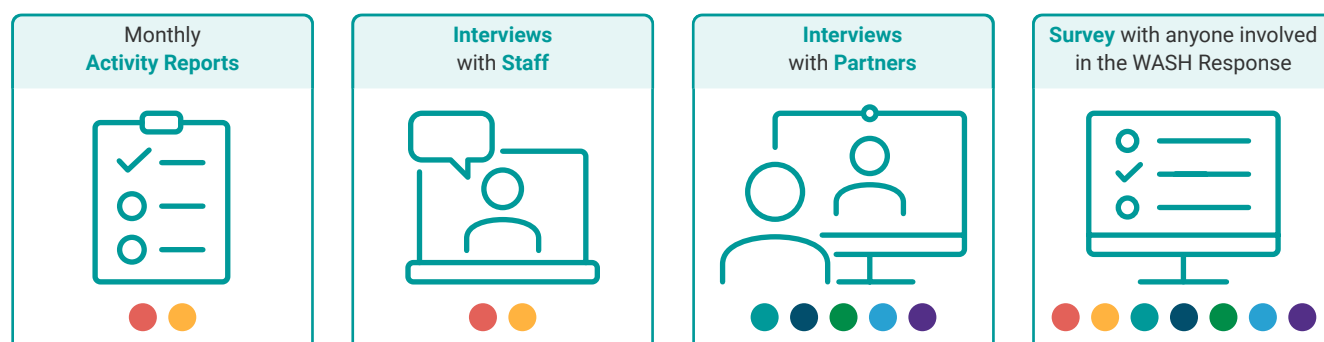
at the time of the study (figure updated from the GWC website⁸)



Context-specific evaluations were completed at two-time points over a 6-months period to account for coordination variability using a mixed-methods protocol, including (Figure 3):

- 1 **Activity Report:** A survey was created and distributed via a web-based survey platform (Qualtrics, Provo, USA) to collect monthly activity reports. This included information on: WASH coordination platform functionality with detailed tracking of staff availability, support received, core functions developed during the month, and outcomes reached during the month. Every month, from November to April 2023, an email was sent to the national WASH coordination platform staff (and to the sub-national level if relevant in the context) to ask them to fill out the activity report.
- 2 **Key-informant interviews with WASH coordination platform staff:** The goal was to recruit at least the national Coordinator and the Information Manager twice over the course of the study to conduct a key informant interview. The interview explored: the context, basic assumptions, core functions and outcomes of the coordination platform, and barriers, impact, and evolution of the coordination. Other members of the staff (including the national co-Coordinator and Coordinators from the sub-national levels) were recruited according to the context and their presence on the contact list shared by the Coordinator.
- 3 **Key-informant interviews with WASH coordination platform partners:** The goal was to recruit between 10 to 20 individuals per context to interview twice over the course of the study (at 1-month and 6-months, respectively). Interviews explored similar themes as the interviews with WASH coordination platform staff (except the basic assumptions). To recruit study participants, emails addresses were randomly selected from the updated contact list used by the coordination platform staff to conduct the CCPM, based on their role (international organizations (INGO), national organizations (NNGO), government, donors, and others) to obtain a representative sample of the groups making up the WASH coordination platform. The goal was to have at least 3 participants from national and international organizations, and at least one government and one donor. If the initially selected partners did not show interest in the second interview, new persons were randomly selected and recruited from the same coordination platform contact list.
- 4 **Online survey with anyone self-defining involved in the response:** The goal was to recruit as many people involved in the response as possible to collect quantitative information on core functions and outcomes, barriers to coordination, and the impact of the WASH coordination. The survey was developed in a web-based survey platform (Qualtrics, Provo, USA) and distributed (in English and a locally appropriate language) by sharing the link through the contact list. The same survey was distributed twice over the 6-month study, in conjunction with each round of key informant interviews.

Figure 3
Mixed-methods protocol illustrating the four data collection components and stakeholders involved in data collection



Key informant interviews were intended to last about one hour, were conducted in the appropriate language (English, French, or Spanish), were audio recorded, and then were transcribed using Temi software (San Francisco, US), Zoom software (San Jose, US), or by hand. The activity reports and online surveys were individually downloaded from Qualtrics.

To complete the research goals and to assess the outcomes and impacts of the WASH coordination platform with different coordination levels, the initial updated Minimum Requirements framework was followed (**Figure 1**). All material was uploaded on a qualitative and mixed-methods research software program (NVivo, Doncaster, Australia) to analyze unstructured text. The research team first classified the information by context, basic assumptions and core actions from the initial version of the Minimum Requirements, outcomes from the Theory of Change, and impact themes. Then, for information related to the context and the basic assumptions (actions for which the WASH coordination platform staff is not responsible), the information was stratified by 'facilitator', 'barrier', and 'priorities and recommendations'.

Core action information (actions for which the WASH Coordination Platform staff is responsible) was stratified into 'doing/doing well', 'not doing/not doing well', and 'priorities and recommendations'.

Results were provided by theme (context, basic assumptions, core actions, outcomes, and impact) for each data collection type (activity report, key-informant interviews with coordination platform staff, key-informant interviews with coordination platform partners, and online survey) with the number of mentions. Note that the number of mentions should not be compared by data collection type because of the question type (closed questions in activity report and survey listing specific activities and outcomes, against opened questions during the key-informant interviews). Therefore, quantitative information on outcomes from the survey is provided in this report, while qualitative information from activity reports and key-informant interviews helps to build an understanding of the actions and outcomes of the WASH coordination platform. **Note that the 2023 Minimum Requirements have been slightly amended and this country report does not tackle the latest revision of the Minimum Requirements.**



Results

Results are described for **Colombia** by theme (context, basic assumptions, core actions, outcomes, and impact) for each data collection type (activity report, key-informant interviews with coordination platform staff, key-informant interviews with coordination platform partners, and online survey) with the number of mentions.

A **joint report** has also been developed to compare the five WASH coordination platforms with different levels of coordination.

Figure 4
Presentation of the results,
following the Minimum
Requirements and
the Theory of Change



1 Data collected

Over the 6-month data collection, we collected information from (Figure 5):

- 1 **Activity Report:** We collected 1 activity report between November and April 2023 for the national Information Manager in January.
- 2 **Key informant interviews with Cluster staff:** We recruited 3 different people from the Cluster staff contact list and 4 key-informant interviews were conducted with the UNICEF WASH Advisor performing the role of the national Coordinator when waiting for the recruitment of a new Coordinator (Rounds I and II) and the Information Manager (Round I). While we discussed with the former Cluster Coordinator, we were not able to record the conversation.
- 3 **Key-informant interviews with Cluster partners:** We recruited 58 people from the Cluster contact list (58 contacts) and 17 key-informant interviews were conducted in Spanish with 13 different people. Among them, 11 were conducted with partners from international organizations, 3 with partners from national organizations, and 3 with others organizations (including UNHCR, CICR, and Cruz Roja Colombia).
- 4 **Online survey with anyone self-defining involved in the response:** The online survey was sent to the Cluster contact list (60 contacts) and filled out 1 time by an individual from an international NGO in English. Because of the low response rate, data from the survey was not presented.

Figure 5
Total number of data
collected by data collection
and stakeholder types

	 Monthly Activity Reports	 Interviews with Staff	 Interviews with Partners	 Survey with anyone involved in the WASH Response
Coordination Staff (national level)	1	3		
Coordination Staff (sub-national level)				
National Organizations			3	
International Organizations			11	1
Government				
Donor				
Other (UN, Observer, etc.)			3	
	N = 1	N = 3	N = 17	N = 1

2 Context

In 2023, more than 7.7M of people were in need of humanitarian assistance in Colombia⁹ and there were approximately 2.5M Venezuelan refugees¹⁰. The effects of armed conflicts, disasters and events caused by the climate variability, and internal and Venezuelan population migration, were identified as the most pressing problems contributing to the increased need for humanitarian aid.

Colombia has two humanitarian platforms:

- 1 a platform related to migration and refugees from Venezuela, chaired by the 'Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos' (GIFMM) (UNHCR and IOM); and,
- 2 the 'armed conflict and disaster' platform led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

While the WASH coordination platform is officially called a 'Sector' for GIFMM and a 'Cluster' for OCHA, the WASH sector works as one on a strategy called 'back to back' with one single national WASH coordination platform (one national Coordinator but two Information Managers).

In 2023, an estimated 4.6M people were in need of WASH assistance and services and the humanitarian response cycle targeted 255.4K in WASH need with a 9.7M financial requirement for the 'armed conflicts and disasters' emergencies. The objective of the WASH Cluster in 2023 was to focus on timely access and quality of WASH at the community level and in support of other sectors.

Actions are mainly implemented at a community and family level and incorporate the infrastructure component, the strengthening of capacities, and promotion of hygiene practices and the distribution of critical items or hygiene kits.

In 2023, an estimated 3.80M refugees, migrants, and returnees from Venezuela were in need of WASH assistance, and the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan targeted 288.7K in WASH need and 22.6M in financial requirement. The objective of the WASH Cluster was to address the needs and gaps through:

- 1 Construction, rehabilitation, and improvement of systems for access to water and sanitation services, as well as the installation and promotion of hygiene in non-formal settlements where refugees, migrants in destination, and host communities reside;
- 2 Implementation and maintenance of WASH services, hygiene promotion and distribution of critical supplies for those in-transit and those engaging in pendular movements at key assistance points and facilities providing other humanitarian services; and,
- 3 Technical assistance and advocacy with government authorities on WASH policies and for the response for vulnerable refugees and migrants and affected host communities (especially for binational indigenous peoples) from a multiple impact perspective and differential age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approaches.

Barriers related to the context that may impact the effectiveness of the WASH Coordination emerged during the key-informant interviews with Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 1
Barriers specific to the Context that
affect the efficacy of the WASH Cluster

Activity Report (no information)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 10 informants, 59%)
Barriers	– Partners' turnover and capacity (2, 66%); – Lack of access to areas hard to reach because of security and infrastructure reasons (1, 33%). – More crises and need for WASH response after COVID-19 (1, 33%). – Limitations in the availability of high-quality data (the National Population Census conducted in 2018 has limitations for the rural context) (1, 33%).	– Partners' turnover (3, 18%). – Lack of access to hard-to-reach areas because of security and infrastructure reasons (3, 18%). – Lack of funding for the WASH response to cover all the identified needs (2, 12%). – Different partners' capacity and mandates (2, 12%). – Poor internet network services that impact communication and information sharing (2, 12%).

9 OCHA. *Humanitarian Response Plan: Colombia*; 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-plan-de-respuesta-humanitaria-2023-marzo-2023>.

10 Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela (R4V). *América Latina y el Caribe, Refugiados y Migrantes Venezolanos en la Región* – Sept 2022. <https://www.r4v.info/es/document/r4v-america-latina-y-el-caribe-refugiados-y-migrantes-venezolanos-en-la-region-sept-2022>.

3 Basic Assumptions

Basic Assumptions include the actions needed for effective coordination for which the National WASH Cluster staff is **not** responsible. Five basic assumptions were identified in the Minimum Requirements.

Staffing and Structure (BA.1)

- The national-level and sub national NCP staff is adequately staffed, with low turnover, and funded.
- Sub national-NCPs are functional as needed and referenced in the national Terms of Reference.
- Strategic decisions are regularly taken by a group of partners and local actors (e.g. Strategic Advisory Group) representing the interest of all the WASH stakeholders.
- Technical Working Groups are functional as needed.

UNICEF is the Cluster Lead Agency for the WASH sector and supports the WASH Cluster in Colombia. This basic assumption also includes any support received from UNICEF in terms of support, and by extension, any support received by the Global WASH Cluster.

In 2023, the WASH Cluster had two levels of coordination. At the national level, the Coordinator (UNICEF) left before the beginning of the study. A double-hatted WASH Chief (UNICEF) took the function to coordinate the two coordination platforms (see Basic Assumption BA.3). The recruitment for a dedicated (80% Humanitarian and 20% Development) Coordinator started at the end of data collection. There was a double-hatted co-Coordinator position (ACF) but the person changed in the middle of data collection. There was also one dedicated Information Management Officer position for each platform: one filled and financed until 2024 for the 'migration' coordination platform (iMMAP) but she left at the end of the study; and, one position filled in the middle of the study for the 'armed conflict and disaster' coordination platform ('Evident' consortium with iMMAP, REACH, and ACAPS). At the sub-national level, there were 6 territories with activated sub-national structures and coordinated by double-hatted UNICEF, an organization or the government. Additionally, the WASH Cluster has a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) with 8 people working on the strategy and at least two Technical Working Groups (TWiGs) on COVID and handwashing for disability people.

I think they need to expand their capacity. Because it is basically one person who leads the Cluster and this person manages so much information, with so many people, with so many organizations. It should be expanded a bit more.

Partner informant

There are many things to improve, but those things are small compared to the effort that has been made by UNICEF to try to share good practices, to try to share new work methodologies at the community level, to try to strengthen the capacities of the partners looking for training spaces, and even with the government.

Staff informant

During data collection, we were able to interview the double-hatted WASH Advisor twice, who took the Coordinator position and the Information Management Officer for the 'migration' coordination platform. Several facilitators, barriers, and recommendations on 'Staffing and Structure' emerged from the Cluster staff and partners interviews.

Table 2
Facilitators, Barriers, Priorities and Recommendations for the 'Staffing and Structure' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 12 informants, 71%)
Facilitators	– Cluster staff has Terms of Reference. – The Cluster received support from the Global WASH Cluster (capacity strengthening) in January. – The Cluster received support from UNICEF (revision of the workplan and information management products).	– Sub-clusters staff have low turnover because some of them are led by authorities (and not by United National Volunteer contract that end after 4 years) (1, 33%). – The Cluster received 'indirect' support from the Global WASH Cluster from the website (e.g., market-based programming tools) but also direct call (1, 33%). – The Information Manager participated to a training organized by the GWC (1, 33%). – The Cluster received support from UNICEF in Colombia and the Latin America and the Caribbean (LACRO) UNICEF team (technical assistance and interchange with other UNICEF office in South America, capacity strengthening, and strategic support) (1, 33%). – Important leadership of UNICEF to integrate the government and the development side in the WASH Cluster (1, 33%). – UNICEF has the leadership in WASH for a long time and that makes easier for organizations to understand what WASH is (1, 33%). – Funding for one of the IM until 2024 (1, 33%). – Future recruitment of the dedicated Cluster Coordinator (1, 33%). – Technical groups are on demand, depending on the needs (1, 33%). – The SAG is composed by different organizations and work on the strategy (1, 33%).	– The Cluster Staff at the National level is active and well organized (3, 18%). – Effective and important structure of the coordination at the sub-national level to share information and quickly respond (2, 12%). – UNICEF has a lot of experience and representation in WASH in each territory and improve relationship with the government) (4, 24%). – TWiGs exist and are very active in sharing experiences (1, 6%).

Table 2 (continued)

Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 12 informants, 71%)
Barriers	– Lack of staff to improve the level of coordination (including double-hatted co-Coordinator and Coordinator) (2, 66%). – High turnover of Cluster staff (1, 33%). – Double-hatted coordinator (20% of time dedicated to the Coordination) (1, 33%).	– High turnover of staff and there is no leader and leadership to support the coordination at the national level (5, 29%). – There is not a lot of communication and coordination between the national and subnational coordination (2, 12%). – Unequal coordination at the regional level (1, 6%). – UNICEF does not work with experienced people and do not follow the response plans of local institutions, so it affects the impact of the WASH Cluster (1, 6%). – UNICEF does not help the WASH Coordination to be more efficient and improve visibility (1, 6%);
Priorities and Recommendations	– To increase the number of Cluster staff (2, 67%). – To have exclusive funding and human resources for the 'development – nexus side' coordination (1, 33%). – To better manage the timeframe and the capacity of the coordination staff (1, 33%).	– To strengthen the staff at the national level (2, 12%). – To improve the coordination at the local level and communication with the national level (1, 6%). – The co-leadership of the WASH Cluster Staff should go to an implementing partner and not to another UN agency (1, 6%). – The WASH Cluster should have more neutrality because the Cluster's strategies sometimes reflect UNICEF policies (and more aligned towards issues of the childhood) (1, 6%).

Partners’ Engagement (BA.2)

- Partners regularly contribute to key cluster core functions and participate to coordination meetings.

According to the 2023 Humanitarian Response and 2023 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, there were 17 and 29 partners active in the WASH response, respectively. There were 32 partners involved in the WASH sector according to the Coordinator.

Data related to Cluster partners’ engagement was mainly collected via key-informant interviews with Cluster staff, but also emerged from the interview with the Cluster partners.

We do not always have timely information, it is not always shared within the Cluster. Let’s say that it’s like reserved information that is not shared so easily. And I think that this can be a barrier to being able to determine exactly the impact that the Cluster actions have.

Partner informant

Table 3
Facilitators, Barriers, Priorities and Recommendations for the ‘Partners’ Engagement’ by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 5 informants, 29%)
Facilitators	– Between 50 and 75% of partners share their data in January.		
Barriers		– Some partners do not follow Cluster’s strategies and recommendations (2, 67%).	– Some partners are not active and do not share information relevant to the WASH coordination (3, 18%). – Each organization and agency has their own agenda and expectations that make the coordination difficult (1, 6%). – There is no budget within an organization to dedicate one person to work with the WASH Cluster (2, 12%).
Priorities and Recommendations			

Inter-Cluster Coordination Support (BA.3)

- The Humanitarian Coordination Team and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (OCHA and ICCG) are functional and support the WASH Cluster as needed.

Data related to Inter-Cluster Coordination Support was mainly collected via key-informant interviews with Cluster staff, but also emerged from the interview with the Cluster partners.

We almost need a person at 100% to be in charge of making the report and reviewing the data. So it would be easier if the two coordination platforms were reunited, at least for information reporting.
Partner informant

Table 4
Facilitators, Barriers, Priorities and Recommendations for the ‘Inter-Cluster Coordination Support’ by data collection type

	Activity Report (no information)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 6 informants, 6%)
Facilitators			– The two coordination groups both work well and there is no confusion for partners (1, 6%).
Barriers		– Having two coordination platforms duplicate the work and is time-consuming (2, 67%).	– There are too many coordination structures that the same partners participate in (OCHA, GIFMM)/oversaturation of the coordination space (2, 12).
Priorities and Recommendations		– To facilitate the processes of the two coordination platforms (1, 33%).	– To have more information sharing and communication between the different coordination structures to avoid duplication of engagement for partners (3, 18%). – Inter-Cluster Coordination is good but should be improved and reinforced to have a more effective response on WASH issues (1, 6%). – To unify the two platforms (1, 6%).

Host Government (BA.4)

- The host government facilitates or leads the WASH Cluster mission as needed.

The WASH Cluster primarily collaborates with the Vice Ministry of Water and Basic Sanitation, responsible for formulating and adopting policies, programs, projects, and regulations for the population's access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and with the Ministry of Health, which oversees the surveillance of drinking water and formulates cross-sectoral health care policies related to issues such as menstrual health. The government changed in Colombia in August 2022.

Data related to the Host Government was mainly collected via the key-informant interviews with Cluster staff informants. However, many Cluster partner informants identified this basic assumption as a barrier impacting the effectiveness of the WASH Coordination and Response.

The government did not want to get involved because it became, a political problem, because many of the host communities did not agree. So, the main barrier is the resistance that the government put on the humanitarian interventions.
Partner informant

Table 5
Facilitators, Barriers, Priorities and Recommendations for the 'Host Government' by data collection type

	Activity Report (no information)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 3 informants, 100%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 9 informants, 53%)
Facilitators		– Good opportunity with the new government to change the coordination structure (1, 33%). – Government is involved in the coordination at the sub-national level (Coordinator) (1, 33%).	– Good opportunity with the new government to ease coordination and WASH response (accepts there is an emergency due to armed conflict, and changes guidance and improves relationships between ministries and with the Cluster (1, 6%).
Barriers		– High turnover among the government members who are coordinating with the national WASH Cluster (1, 33%). – The coordination component is not always present in the job description of government member that may be involved in the coordination at the sub-national level (1, 33%). – No regulation to facilitate the WASH response in settlements and many restrictions (no easy to get permits and no legal conditions) (1, 33%).	– Coordinating with the (local) government is complex and the government does not want to be involved (especially in support on migration) (5, 29%). – The structure of the government is complex with poor communication between ministries (2, 12%). – Coordination is more complex because the government is now involved in the emergency related to armed conflict (1, 6%).

Priorities and Recommendations

Coordination Financial Needs (BA.5)

- Financial needs (other than staffing) for coordination at national and sub-national level are met and provided by the Cluster Lead Agency.

No information on the Coordination Financial Needs was collected over the course of the study.

4 Core Actions

Core Actions include the actions needed for effective coordination for which the National WASH Cluster staff is responsible. Twelve core actions were identified in the Minimum Requirements and one action emerged over the course of the study.

Basic Coordination (CA.1.1)

- Capacity development and learning needs for partners are identified, training resources are made available and learning activities are conducted.
- Frequency and structure of the coordination meetings are in-line with the coordination functions, organized and minutes recorded.
- Information sharing tools are established and updated, with information regularly shared.

The platform helps us gather more information and analytical inputs for decision-making.

Partner informant

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 6
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'Basic Coordination' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 3 informants, 100%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 15 informants, 88%)
Doing well	– The Cluster government guidance and transition plan exist. – Coordination meetings (on an ad-hoc frequency) exist. – Capacity-building activities are organized by the Cluster (use of the tools and carrying pilot if in-situ tool). – A contact list exists and there was a request for organizations at national and subnational level to share their focal points in January. – Two information sharing platforms exist¹¹.	– The Cluster has invested a lot in strengthening the capacities of the organizations (on WASH activities, Cluster's tools, GWC's toolkit) (2, 67%). – Coordination and specific meetings are ad-hoc (2 regular and 2 ad-hoc were organized between January and June 2023). – The Cluster describes the situation (based on information products), addresses some challenges, and discusses the quality during the meetings (2, 67%). – Meetings at the subnational level are regular and the national staff sometimes assists to provide technical assistance (1, 33%). – Bilateral meetings are organized with partners on request (1, 33%). – Information sharing combined with advocacy helps partners to make strategic decisions (1, 33%).	– Partners participate to coordination meetings (15, 88%). – The meetings and information sharing help partners to make strategic decisions (9, 53%). – The meetings help partners to strengthen their relationships (6, 35%). – The challenges and response gaps are identified and addressed during the coordination meetings and with information sharing (5, 29%). – The Cluster shares/reinforces trainings and capacity building activities (2, 12%).

¹¹ Link to the WASH Cluster Information Sharing Platforms: <https://www.r4v.info/en/node/382> (migration), and <https://response.reliefweb.int/colombia/water-sanitation-hygiene> (armed conflicts and disasters)

Table 6 (continued)

Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 3 informants, 100%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 15 informants, 88%)
Not doing well		– There have not been coordination meetings lately (2, 12%). – The Cluster neglects the technical component and focuses more on coordination, assuming that all organizations have a good technical level (1, 6%). – The meetings or the minutes are not good quality 1, 6%). – The Cluster doesn't support partners at the time they need to make decisions (1, 6%).
All Priorities and Recommendations	– To improve the communication with organizations and accompaniment even though it is much better than before (1, 33%). – To encourage organizations to share information among themselves (1, 33%). – To provide information at a more detailed level to allow organizations to plan the response (1, 33%). – To improve advocacy with partners to make sure they are getting the message and use the information for a strategic approach (1, 33%).	– To conduct some trainings for partners on technical aspects to harmonize the response (2, 12%). – To compile and disseminate more up-to-date information through a repository (2, 12%). – To share more lessons learned (2, 12%). – To coordinate more to avoid duplication (2, 12%). – To have more in-person meetings to strengthen relationships between partners (2, 12%).

Assessment Strategy (CA.2.1)

- An assessment strategy to collect assessment data from partners has been jointly agreed, shared, and implemented.
- Standard WASH Core Assessment Indicators have been developed, shared with partners and have been integrated into multi-sector data collection initiatives.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

I think one of the main gaps is the lack of information at the community level. For example, last year we conducted the MSNA and each sector was limited to eight questions. We understand the need to keep it short, but the number of interviews was very low, which means the data is not representative.

Staff informant

Table 7

Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'Assessment Strategy and Methodology' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 5 informants, 29%)
Doing well	– A need assessment strategy and methodology exist and the key concepts for water-focused WASH needs analysis was presented in January. – WASH Core assessment indicators exist and in January, the Cluster worked on the revision of the information sources, updated the MIRA questions, and assessed the JMP indicators for the needs assessment. – Assessment analysis exists. – In January, no information was collected for the needs assessments, but inputs have been consolidated for the presentation of key figures in the information products.	– The Cluster uses the Multi-Sectoral Need Assessment (MSNA) to conduct need assessment (1, 33%).	– Rapid need assessment exists to identify needs and understand the context (3, 18%). – The Cluster helps to unify criteria for need identification and analysis (1, 6%).
Not doing well		– The MSNA is conducted with a low number of interviews, the communities are not well targeted, and there are only 8 questions on WASH (1, 33%). – Collecting information at the community-level create expectations and there is no process to return the information to them in the process (1, 33%).	– The methodology and technical assistance to conduct the need assessment is not shared with the territories (only national level) (1, 6%).
Priorities and Recommendations			– To improve the need assessment methodology by giving more weight to the WASH aspect (1, 6%).

Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) (CA.3.1)

- The Humanitarian Response Plan (or other) has been jointly revised, agreed, and shared with partners, with key consideration for inter-sectoral projects, accountability to affected populations, and for local actor inclusion.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

We always need to keep in mind there are areas that are never mapped in the HNO exercise. And obviously those areas are not prioritized for the HRP.

Partner informant

Table 8
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the 'Humanitarian Response Plan' by data collection

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 3 informants, 100%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 9 informants, 53%)
Doing well	– Two HRP/WASH Response plans exist (response plan for migration/displacement and the humanitarian response plan for the armed conflict/disasters response).	– Completion of the HNO and HRP (1, 33%).	– The HNO is a product that helps partners to make decisions and maintain an overview and understand characteristics of the WASH issues (5, 29%).
Not doing well		– The Cluster has issue to have information at the community level and micro-territory level (2, 67%). – Partners don't use the HRP to make decisions (e.g., the main gap highlighted in the HRP was still not covered in partners' projects) (1, 33%).	– The evaluations do not give partners a vision of what is needed because it is too general and not enough exhaustive (in terms of areas and technical issues) (2, 12%). – Some areas are never prioritized because of a lack of data because organizations are not present in those areas (1, 6%). – The publication of the HNO/HRP is too late and that makes difficult to make decisions and take actions (1, 6%). – The Project Cycle Planning and Reporting often consumes a lot of resource that can be better spent on implementation (1, 6%).
All priorities and Recommendations		– To have primary data at the community level (1, 33%).	– To keep in mind that some areas are never being mapped in the HNO exercise and will not be prioritized in the HRP (1, 6%). – To give more flexibility to organizations compared to what the HRP says, as the situation in Colombia is dynamic and needs flexible structures and planning (1, 6%). – To focus more on hygiene promotion (1, 6%).

WASH Strategy (CA.3.2)

- A WASH Strategy or Strategic Operational Framework has been revised, jointly agreed, shared, and implemented (with consideration for transition, inter-sectoral, accountability to affected populations, and localisation).

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

The Cluster needs to be very clear about its objectives and define responsibilities. The document being used is the same one from six years ago, just updated, but it doesn't reflect the actions, how they will be carried out, or the intended approach – and it lacks specific objectives.

Partner informant

Table 9
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'WASH Strategy' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 66%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 10 informants, 59%)
Doing well	– The SOF and WASH Standards exist. – The Cluster focused on issues for response prioritization in January.		– The Cluster develops a work plan on a participatory manner (2, 12%). – The Cluster works as a tutor to share new experiences and innovations (1, 6%).
Not doing well			– Outdated WASH strategy (2, 12%).
All priorities and Recommendations		– To have a seasonally and prospective way of thinking and planning (1, 33%). – To review the workplan once the Cluster is on track with the new Coordinator (1, 33%).	– To review strategic documents (objectives, work plan, standards, etc.) to make them clearer and to standardize the response (3, 18%). – To review the technical documents (e.g., minimal items for hygiene kits, hygiene practices (3, 18%).

Inter-sectorial Synergies (CA.3.3)

- Inter-sectorial synergies have been identified with integration into response plans.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

We are very close with other sectors such as education, with health, and we are improving our approach with the nutrition sector.

Staff informant

Table 10
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the ‘Inter-sectorial Synergies’ by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 66%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 2 informants, 12%)
Doing well	– Planned Joint field mission in January.	– The WASH Cluster is improving its approach with the Education, Health, and Nutrition sectors (1, 33%). – The WASH Cluster tries to coordination the response in specific communities with other sectors (1, 33%).	
Not doing well			
All priorities and Recommendations		– The WASH Cluster will need technical assistance to work on strategy on Nutrition, Climate Change and in Health Centre (1, 33%).	– To coordinate more with the Health sector (2, 12%).

Response Monitoring and Monitoring Framework (CA.4.1)

- Data on response monitoring, quality of the response, funding status, and partners capacity is regularly collected, analyzed, and shared informing advocacy activities.

- Response monitoring data is disaggregated whenever possible, and regularly disseminated.
- The monitoring plan and framework have been jointly established/agreed, shared, and implemented.
- A joint IM framework and workplan for the NCP has been developed based on a diagnostic review with partners.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 11
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'Response Monitoring' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 8 reports)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 7 informants, 41%)
Doing well	– IM Diagnosis and IM framework and workplan exists (and the results of the workplan were presented in January). – The Cluster made the comparison of the presence/response capacity of the organization with the PIN and reviewed the tools to facilitate the AAP process for organization (still under review). – Gap analysis and implementation of Corrective Actions to improve WASH response exist.	– The Cluster has a workplan for the information products (1, 33%). – The Cluster produces dashboard and a lot of maps and visualizations to allow partners to identify the zones and to plan the response (1, 33%). – Infographics and response monitoring also serve for the advocacy (1, 33%).	– Partners monthly share their activities to the Cluster to understand who is doing what and where (5, 29%). – There is reporting of the funding/donor (1, 6%). – The products are used to identify the gaps that exist between the needs, activities, and the funds but also to see the evolution of the sector at the national level (1, 6%).
Not doing well	– There is currently no complete information on the Funding Tracking System (FTS) platform.	– There is not enough staff to work on the monitoring and evaluation (1, 33%).	– There is a duplication of response monitoring between the different coordination platforms (1, 6%). – There are no monitoring tools (1, 6%).
All priorities and Recommendations			– To get more visual information on the reporting (1, 6%). – To unify response criteria and progress indicators between the coordination platforms (1, 6%). – To increase the periodicity of indicators monitoring (not only at the end of the year) (1, 6%). – To simplify the reporting tool (1, 6%).

Field Visits and Quality Assurance (CA.4.2)

- Field visits are regularly conducted, documented by the Cluster staff and inform the monitoring of the quality of the response.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, but did not emerge during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 12
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the 'Field Visits and Quality Assurance' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 0 informants)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 0 informants)
Doing well	– There are field visits and there was support for information management processes to strengthen the response and monitoring of deliveries to the population in transit in Necoclí department of Antioquia in January.		
Not doing well			
All priorities and Recommendations			

Coordination Performance Monitoring (CA.4.3)

- A workshop has been held to define a collective coordination workplan.

In 2022, 17 partners participated in the Cluster Performance Monitoring. Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, but did not emerge during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 13
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the 'Coordination Performance Monitoring' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 0 informants)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 0 informants)
Doing well	– The CCPM exists.		
Not doing well			
All priorities and Recommendations			

Emergency Response Preparedness Approach (CA.5)

- Hazard identification, risk assessment and monitoring has been undertaken by the NCP.
- Minimum Preparedness Actions, Contingency Planning, and Advanced Preparedness Actions exist for high risk or recurring disasters.

Information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity report, and emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

I think there is a fundamental priority for the cluster that is 'how to anticipate situations that we already know are going to happen? Or how to develop preventive actions against those effects?'

Partner informant

Table 14

Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the 'Emergency Response Preparedness Approach' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 1 informant, 33%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 3 informants, 18%)
Doing well	– Operational Presence Mapping is undertaken by the WASH Cluster.		– The Cluster maps partners capacity to provide a multisectoral response (1, 6%)
Not doing well		– The Cluster doesn't have enough information to work on the emergency response preparedness (1, 33%).	– No approach for the 'Nevado del Ruiz' volcano eruption (1, 6%).
All priorities and Recommendations		– To work on the preparedness approach including climate change impact and to have a roadmap according to the disasters (1, 33%).	– To anticipate situations the Cluster already knows are going to arise (El Niño, floods, etc.) by developing preventive actions against the adverse effects (2, 12%). – To have more knowledge of the development plans at the local levels (e.g., risk maps in water systems) to be ready when an emergency happens (1, 6%).

Advocacy Initiatives (CA.6.1)

- A joint strategic approach to advocacy is monitored which includes identification of issues, development of messages, and tactics targeting key stakeholders.

No information about actions that have been completed by the WASH Cluster was provided in the activity report, but this theme emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

Table 15
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for ‘Advocacy Initiatives’ by data collection type

Activity Report (no information)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 1 informant, 33%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 4 informants, 24%)
Doing well	– The Cluster works on advocacy to try to move the funding from water and hygiene to sanitation (1, 33%).	– The Cluster plays a role in advocacy and support in getting the resources for the country (1, 6%).
Not doing well	– The Cluster sends advocacy messages to the organizations to improve the quality and the planning of their activities (1, 33%).	
All priorities and Recommendations	– The Cluster needs to help partners get funding (1, 33%).	– To generate some more visibility and clearer advocacy strategies with (new and development) donors (2, 12%). – To better distribute the funding between partners (including for different crises and development partners) (2, 12%).

Advocacy with government specifically emerged during data collection with the WASH Cluster and partners informants and respondents and therefore, was described separately in the results. Advocacy with the Government includes any action taken to include the Host Government in the coordination and help WASH partners to navigate with the local authorities and current politics.

When we know that certain organizations will be working in specific communities, we open communication channels with the local authorities.

Staff informant

Table 16
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'Advocacy with Government' by data collection type

Activity Report (no information)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 67%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 12 informants, 71%)
Doing well	– The Cluster facilitates the work of partners with the government (2, 67%). – The Cluster connects the government with the work of the WASH sector to give more visibility (1, 33%).	– The Cluster facilitates the work of partners with the government and is a good channel for communication and dialogue (8, 47%). – The Cluster raises awareness/makes the humanitarian response more visible (3, 18%).
Not doing well		– There is no coordination between the Health department and the WASH Cluster (2, 12%).
All priorities and Recommendations		– To continue to advocate the WASH response with the government to visualize the work that is done and legislate in a more flexible way for partners' work (3, 18%). – To have more interactions and coordination with (local) government (4, 25%). – The Cluster should be more demanding regarding government responsibilities for the humanitarian situation (1, 6%). – To strengthen institutional government capacities (1, 6%).

Accountability to Affected Populations (CA.7)

- AAP is mainstreamed throughout the HPC and a key component of the WASH Cluster strategy. This includes AAP workshop and complaints and feedback mechanism.

Tools and mechanisms such as the workshop on AAP, the Safe and Accessible Community Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms, Communications and Participation Strategy with Affected Populations, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) strategy, and Quality Assurance Initiative that are completed by the WASH Cluster was collected via the activity reports and surveys, but also emerged during the key-informant interviews with the Cluster staff and partner informants.

What matters most is not the activities themselves, but the people. How are we serving them? What quality are we guaranteeing in the assistance we provide? Some aspects are beyond the Cluster's direct control, since we don't implement, but I believe one priority should be to create spaces where organizations can share how they are working in the field. Expanding these spaces for exchanging good practices is essential, because everyone can learn from one another. This should be a key area of focus.

Staff informant

Table 17
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for 'Accountability to Affected Populations' by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 3 informants, 100%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 2 informants, 12%)
Doing well	– Safe and Accessible Community Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms exist. – Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) exists. – Revision of the tools to facilitate the AAP process for organization (still under review).	– The Cluster collects information from partners on affected populations inputs (1, 33%). – The Cluster proposes strategies of autogestion at the community-level (1, 33%). – The Cluster impacts affected populations and beneficiaries through the quality assurance and the accountability to affected population strategies (1, 33%).	– UNICEF has guidelines on issues of water and sanitation, and responsibility and accountability (1, 6%).
Not doing well			
All priorities and Recommendations		– The Cluster needs to advocate to get 'funding of quality' (and increase the rate to improve the quality of the response by beneficiary) (2, 67%). – To improve communication with the partners to guarantee the accountability of the communities (1, 33%). – To promote from the sector that the needs of the population are seen as needs and not only as activities that they must respond to under a plan (1, 33%).	– To focus on accountability and community monitoring to improve community acceptance and improve the response (1, 6%).

Cross-cutting themes needed for good programming (CT)

The Cross-cutting themes include gender, inclusion, environmental protection, cash-based interventions, localization, and the Nexus and should be incorporated into WASH strategies. This component was asked in the activity report, and emerged from the interviews with the Cluster staff and partners informants.

The root of the problem is to improve the whole infrastructure on a medium to long term basis. So, the coordination should try to create synergies with big international donors and their programs. And also, the coordination should facilitate the dialogue. For example the 'classical' donor agencies don't talk between each other. The cluster coordinator should try to bridge them somehow.

Partner informant

Table 18
Actions done by the WASH Cluster and Recommendations for the cross-cutting themes by data collection type

	Activity Report (from 1 report)	Interviews with Cluster Staff (from 2 informants, 50%)	Interviews with Cluster Partners (from 6 informants, 29%)
Doing well	– Cross-cutting and transversal themes identification exists. – Protection and VGB is part of the intersectoral work.	– The Cluster staff capacity is strengthened in market-based programming thanks to UNICEF (1, 33%). – The Cluster has improved a lot on gender approaches, mainly in menstrual hygiene management (2, 67%). – There was a technical group for handwashing for disability people (1, 33%). – The future Cluster Coordinator will work on the Nexus approach (20% of the time) (1, 33%).	– The Cluster has discussed some cross-cutting issues (PSEA) during the meeting (1, 6%). – The Cluster facilitates the interactions and work with local organizations (1, 6%).
Not doing well			– Some WASH local partners do not have access to the WASH Coordination because of the conception of the coordination by international organizations (1, 6%).
All priorities and Recommendations		– To work on the environmental and climate change issue (1, 33%).	– To improve the guidelines on protection (1, 6%). – To move from humanitarian response to sustained solutions (e.g., in Choco) (3, 18%). – To encourage and favor the participation of local organizations, national organizations (1, 6%).

5 Outcomes

From the activity report, the Cluster staff perceived that the WASH Cluster helped Cluster partners to reach some outcomes (developed in the Theory of Change). The main outcomes reached by partners reported by the Information Management Officer were:

- Make strategic decisions;
- Identify gaps in the response;
- Reduce gaps in response;
- Define indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation;
- Complete Monitoring & Evaluation;
- Build partners' capacity; and,
- Strengthen stakeholder relationships.

Cluster staff informants confirmed they helped members to make strategic decisions via the annually reviewed Humanitarian Response Plan. The Information Management Officer also frequently produced information products to help partners to identify the gaps in the response. Over the discussion with the Cluster Staff, more recommendations and priorities were discussed on the need assessment strategy and the identification of the gaps than on the other outcomes.

The outcomes the least reached by partners according to the Information Management Officer were:

- Obtain funding; and,
- Evaluate the quality of the programs.

Cluster staff informants did not specifically discuss those two outcomes during the key-informant interviews.

Overall, Cluster partner informants especially discussed that the WASH Cluster helped them to identify the gaps in the response and make strategic decisions during the coordination meetings and with information sharing, but also thanks to the response plans and the 5Ws. They also discussed that the meetings helped partners to strengthen their relationships and to address the challenges that arose during their interventions. The Cluster also facilitated the work of partners with the government and was a good channel for communication and dialogue.



6 Impact and Evolution

The Cluster meetings frequency also changed a little bit; now it is mainly when partners ask, mainly for specific topics. We used to be more proactive, but I cannot be proactive if I don't have staff.

Staff informant

This is a two-sided world; I could say the Cluster is not so efficient but on the other hand, they could argue that I could participate more actively and then it would be maybe better. Which is true.

Partner informant

Most partner informants agreed to say the WASH Cluster in Colombia was meeting their expectations although there was still room for improvement. Two partners discussed the WASH Cluster was not meeting their expectations because the participation of partners was simply reporting their project. One of them, however, discussed that this was two-sided and more participation from them would improve the Cluster. According to them, the WASH coordination had positively evolved and the WASH Cluster had more visible and user-friendly tools and communication channels. Three partners discussed no evolution (one of them mentioned the Cluster did not meet the expectations) and no big activity of the WASH Cluster. Additionally, one informant of the Cluster staff mentioned the WASH coordination negatively evolved because they used to be proactive, but due to the lack of human resources, the Cluster was not able to be dynamic anymore.

The biggest *impact of the WASH Coordination on partners* according to partner respondents was that the WASH coordination helped partners to provide a more effective response and gave more visibility to the WASH sector. Informants also highlighted the importance of the WASH Cluster to: improve the quality of the response and to bring new ideas and approaches in the WASH response.

The absence of a sectoral coordination platform would imply a very uncoordinated response. We couldn't identify where organizations are, which may lead to many organizations doing exactly the same intervention at the same place to the same people. So we wouldn't be able to reach more people. In terms of the response, I think that it would also imply the absence of technical guidelines for us to improve the quality of the response.

Staff informant

The biggest *impact of the WASH coordination on affected populations* according to partner respondents was that it helped to meet the needs, to improve the quality of the intervention for the affected populations and to harmonize the WASH response. The WASH Cluster informants also discussed the increase in accountability to affected populations. Lastly, impact on partners and affected populations were difficult to distinguish for some partners who provided a similar impact for both beneficiaries of the WASH coordination.

I think that this is a great contribution for the communities in a direct way because it helps us [partners] to coordinate the action and for the populations to really receive what is required and not get oversaturated.

Partner informant

Summary of the Results and Discussion

To assess and establish the value-add of staffed WASH coordination in humanitarian emergencies, we collected data from November 2022 to June 2023, including:

- 1 one monthly activity report from Cluster staff;
- 2 three key-informant interviews with the WASH Cluster staff; and
- 3 17 key-informant interviews with partners.

No information via the online survey was collected. The lack of information from the activity report and the online surveys made the analysis to exclusively rely on the key-informant interviews. Results were described by theme (context, 5 basic assumptions, 12+1 core actions, outcomes, and impact) for each data collection type (activity report, key-informant interviews with coordination platform staff, and key-informant interviews with coordination platform partners) with the number of mentions.

Overall, the main **challenges and barriers**, besides insecurity of the context, identified by informants and respondents were:

- 1 The lack of staff (dedicated coordinator and co-facilitator) at the national-level;
- 2 Partner's engagement into the WASH coordination; and,
- 3 The lack of government involvement in the Venezuelan refugee and migration response, leading to restrictions and complex coordination structures.

Those barriers were all related to the basic assumptions needed for an effective WASH coordination for which the WASH Cluster staff is not responsible.

Over the course of the study, partners discussed **activities and core actions** well completed by the WASH Cluster and the most identified by the informants were:

- 1 Basic coordination to support delivery, including meeting and communication with information sharing platforms;
- 2 The facilitation of the communication and dialogue with the government; and,
- 3 The Cluster collected and analyzed data on response activity to produce several information products.

According to Cluster staff and partners informants and respondents, the main **outcomes** the WASH Cluster helped partners to reach were to:

- 1 Make strategic decisions
- 2 Identify the gaps in the response; and,
- 3 Strengthen stakeholders' relationships.

and impacted the WASH response by providing a more effective response and giving more visibility to the WASH sector. The Cluster also impacted by helping to meet the needs, to improve the quality of the intervention for the affected populations and to harmonize the WASH response.

Informants and respondents however discussed actions the WASH Cluster was not doing or not doing well and provided **recommendations** to improve the WASH coordination, including:

- 1 To review the strategic documents (workplan, standards, etc.) to standardize the WASH response;
- 2 To continue to advocate with the government to increase the visibility, interactions, and flexibility with the government; and,
- 3 To work on the Nexus and work on a more sustainable response.



Overall, these results were consistent with the 2022 CCPM results in terms of basic coordination and supporting service delivery that was well rated in the CCPM and this study. This study also highlighted issues regarding the Assessment Strategy and the response plans. The results differed, however, in regard to the 'response monitoring' that was discussed in this study and for which the informants said the Cluster collected and analysed response activity data to produce several information products.

Compared to the assessment of the Minimum Requirements in 2021, the results of this study suggest the WASH Coordination hasn't positively evolved and encountered more challenges. The 'Staffing and Structure', and 'Partners' Participation' were rated the lowest in this study. However, the basic coordination and the response monitoring were rated better in this study.

These results have been compared with those from Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Northeast Nigeria, and Yemen to assess the outcomes and impacts of the WASH Cluster coordination with different staffing levels to establish the value-add of well-staffed WASH coordination in humanitarian emergencies.



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