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## Summary

**GLOBAL WASH CLUSTER**  
25th Annual Meeting  
Main Event | 19-23 April 2021





A collaborative event  
towards a new strategy  
Join the movement

**#GWC25**

The **25th Global Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster’s (GWC) Annual Meeting** was hosted virtually and online from 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021. The meeting was co-convened by the Government of the Netherlands and the Dutch Surge Support (DSS), with technical support from MWEE. The event brought together 72 WASH partners (see *Figure 1*), national cluster coordination platforms, academia, and national governments from around the globe and provided an opportunity for dynamic discussions that reflected upon **sectoral strategies, coordination, partnerships and leadership** by reviewing progress to date, identifying gaps, priorities, and key recommendations provided valuable insights to drive the GWC’s Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 and to shape the future of coordination. The GWC’s Annual Meeting was co-hosted through the generous support and kind contribution from the Government of Netherlands and DSS. We are especially thankful to Sandra Cats, Tika Meijer, Miriam Salomons and the colleagues from MWEE, Jolein Foks and Matthieu Wijnen for the technical support.



And representatives from the following government ministries: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and State of Palestine.

Fig.1 – GWC Partners Attendance at the #GWC25

**GLOBAL WASH CLUSTER**  
25th Annual Meeting  
Satellite Events | 26-30 April 2021



Online Public Event  
Hear from our partners!  
Join the movement

**#GWC25**



Following the GWC’s Annual Meeting, the **GWC Satellite Events** were hosted virtually and online from 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This was a first-of-its-kind event and included 18 participatory and collaborative sessions hosted by a wide range of partners representing the humanitarian WASH sector and beyond. The sessions covered a diverse array of topics, including localisation, GBV and gender, cash and markets, accountability and quality assurance, capacity building and learning, and operational research related to humanitarian coordination in the WASH sector.

## Background

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The GWC was formed in 2006, building upon the success of an existing WASH humanitarian sector working group. As part of the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Cluster System, the GWC has the primary mandate of supporting the 6+1 core functions, which guide national cluster coordination platforms at the country level.<sup>1</sup> The GWC is led by UNICEF, as the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA), and is a partnership of over 80 members, associate and full, working in the humanitarian WASH sector across international organizations, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, academic institutes, and donors. UNICEF and the GWC partners have designated the Cluster Advocacy and Support Team (CAST) to manage GWC in close collaboration with the [Strategic Advisory Group \(SAG\)](#).

The GWC also consists of a [Field Support Team \(FST\)](#), that provides deployable and remote support to national coordination platforms, and [Technical Working Groups \(TWiGs\)](#), that provide technical leadership in key thematic areas, such as Hygiene Promotion, Fecal Sludge Management, Cash and Markets.

The GWC's vision is that effective coordination results in predictable, timely, and quality WASH responses to people affected by humanitarian crises. As such, the GWC is committed to (1) supporting agencies providing appropriate WASH services to those affected by humanitarian crises, (2) ensuring the quality and coherence of the assistance, and (3) ensuring that the assistance is provided in a manner that is equitable, culturally acceptable and protects the dignity of the populations affected by crises. The vision of the GWC is articulated in the [GWC's Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020](#), which was recently successfully completed. The GWC is in the process of developing the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 and the participatory and consultative process to shape the strategy and future of the coordination was launched as part of the GWC's Annual Meeting.

## Day 1 – Strategies

**Sessions Objective:** Identify synergies with the sector and partner strategies and put forward key priorities and thematic areas. **Lead Facilitator:** *Arjan Ottens, Welthungerhilfe (WHH)*

Full presentation available [here](#). Access all Day 1 materials [here](#).

### 1. General introduction and welcome

A short welcome was provided by the GWC Coordinator, Monica Ramos. This was followed with Opening Remarks by UNICEF Deputy Director – EMOPS, Meritxell, Relano, and the Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Henk Ovink. Tika Meijer from DSS provided an outline of the ground rules for the meeting. The session was then handed over to the Lead Facilitator, Arjan Ottens (WHH) to provide a synopsis of the day's agenda.

### 2. Summary of Day 1

The GWC's CAST presented a review of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2016 -2020 and an overview of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 process. Save the Children and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) provided an update on the WASH sector's Road Map 2020-2025 strategy and implementation plan. This was followed by UNICEF WASH Programme Division (WASH PD) outlining UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 and the new Core Commitments for Children (CCC), which emphasises the organizational's commitment to humanitarian coordination as a CLA.

A detailed analysis carried out by the CAST, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and Solidarités International presented an overview of the landscape analysis of existing partners' WASH strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> OCHA (2015) Humanitarian Response <[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/cluster\\_coordination\\_reference\\_module\\_2015\\_final.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/cluster_coordination_reference_module_2015_final.pdf)>. The cluster functions are: 1. support service delivery, 2. inform the HC/HCT's strategic decision-making, 3. plan and implement cluster strategies, 4. monitor and evaluate performance, 5. build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning. 6. support robust advocacy. The +1 function is accountability to affected populations.

The presentations set the scene for the working group session aimed at identifying synergies across the sector and partners strategies, and to put forward key priorities and thematic areas for further consideration. The participants were divided into six groups:

- Information and knowledge management: moderated by REACH ;
- Capacity development and professionalization: moderated by IFRC ;
- Coordination and quality: moderated by the German Toilet Organization (GTO);
- Innovative funding, resource mobilisation, and advocacy: moderated by UNHCR;
- Cross-cutting and transversal issues: moderated by CARE); and
- Lessons learned from the GWC's Strategic Plan 2016-2020: moderated by Red-R.

### 3. Wrap-up and Evaluation

The Lead Facilitator provided a short wrap-up and summary of Day 1 (included below). The real-time evaluation highlighted a good level of satisfaction amongst participants, with 64 per cent indicating that the session and content met their expectations, with group work being the most appreciated part of the day. It was also interesting to note that the perspective of the GWC is seen as an 'octopus' and that participants appreciated the honest discussions, forward-thinking, and shift in focus of coordination and the cluster towards localisation and inclusion of affected populations.

### 4. Key Recommendations

Based on Day 1 discussions, the key recommendations for the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 are:

- Build upon and reinforce the four objectives of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, with increased emphasis on advocacy efforts for the humanitarian coordination and the WASH sector.
- Create synergy between the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 -2025 with other sector and partners strategies, particularly the WASH sector's Road Map 2020 – 2025 (as a core reference document for the sector).
- Encourage the GWC's partners to also create synergies with other sectors and partners strategies, particularly the WASH sector's Road Map 2020 – 2025 and the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025.
- Support the operationalization of the WASH sector's Road Map 2020 – 2025 including the fundraising efforts associated with the strategy.
- Promote and expand key transversal initiatives in the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025, focusing on key priorities such as localisation, cash and markets, accountability and quality assurance, greening our response, and the Triple Nexus.
- Recognise the key role that the GWC's CAST plays in ensuring the linkages between the implementation plan for the Road Map and national coordination platforms – along with the development WASH sector.

## Day 2 – Coordination

**Sessions Objective:** Present landscape of coordination models and the visioning of future models

**Lead Facilitator:** *Jean Lapegue, ACF*

*Full presentation available [here](#). Access all Day 2 materials [here](#).*

### 1. Opening and recap of Day 1

A short welcome was provided by the Lead Facilitator, Jean Lapegue (ACF), along with a reminder of the ground rules and a recap of Day 1. This was followed by a synopsis of the agenda for Day 2.

### 2. Summary of Day 2

The GWC's CAST presented an overview of coordination, including the core functions and basics of coordination. This was followed by a series of five 'rapid fire' sessions presented by a diverse range of stakeholders.

Save the Children and International Medical Corps (IMC) presented on inter-cluster/sectoral coordination, identifying several major barriers to inter-cluster/sectoral coordination between WASH, Health, and Nutrition and explored options for an integrated and holistic approach to public health emergencies. UNICEF provided an overview of the localisation, linked to the Grand Bargain commitments, and explored the options for increasing the role of local actors and partners in co-leading coordination.

The Triple Nexus was presented by the German WASH Network (GWN) and Save the Children, focusing on the engagement of a broad range of partners across the humanitarian, development, and peace actors and explored the options for creating a mutual understanding and defining a common ground to increase networking and working more closely together. The Accountability and Quality Assurance (AQA) was presented by the GWC's CAST, on the behalf of Oxfam and SI, and focused on the coordination model, monitoring of quality and impact, and capacity building requirements for WASH responses. The National Information Centre for the Social Sector (CENISS), Honduras, and UNICEF Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) presented a country case study on a people-centered approach to identify multi-sectorial vulnerability through area-based needs assessment through participatory and inclusive consultation with affected populations. The presentations set the scene for the working group session aimed at identifying three strategic priorities for coordination and the visioning of future coordination models across each of these areas. The participants were divided into five groups :

- Inter-cluster/sectoral coordination: moderated by Save the Children and IMC;
- Localisation: moderated by UNICEF;
- Triple Nexus: moderated by the GWN and Save the Children;
- AQA: moderated by the GWC's CAST (on the behalf of Oxfam and SI); and
- Area-based Coordination: moderated by CENISS, Honduras, and UNICEF LACRO

### 3. Wrap-up and Evaluation

The Lead Facilitator provided a short wrap-up and summary of Day 2 (included below). The real-time evaluation highlighted a good level of satisfaction amongst participants, with 62 per cent indicating that the session and content met their expectations, with the discussions on localisation being the 'light bulb' part of the day. It was also interesting to note that participants cited key factors to effective coordination as impartiality, neutrality, transparency, integration, equal representation, mutual trust and understanding, and joint approach and common voice.

### 4. Key Recommendations

Based on Day 2 discussions, the key recommendations for the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 are:

- For inter-cluster/sectoral coordination, WASH needs to proactively take initiative to cross-sectoral relationships using a common language and bottom-up approach;
- National WASH coordination platforms should engage in the Nexus, by adapting coordination strategies to existing development actors and improving representation and participation by communities;
- National and local partners should be considered more systematically in the governance structures of the national coordination platforms and capacity strengthened to be eligible for funding - aligned with the agenda on localisation;
- Coordination should bring specific attention to countries/areas where there is a limited presence of humanitarian actors;
- Data collection for humanitarian strategy guiding should consider also development data such as global vulnerability, and benefit from existing tools such as WASH Severity Classification, JMP, etc to embrace nexus better; and
- AQA should be contextualized and adapted to national standards and should also lead to a code of conduct shared by all actors.

## Day 3 - Partnerships

**Sessions Objective:** Present the five core principles of partnership and to showcase innovative partnership models

**Lead Facilitator:** *Sunny Guidotti, UNICEF LACRO*

Full presentation available [here](#). Access all Day 3 materials [here](#).

### 1. Opening and recap of Day 2

A short welcome was provided by the Lead Facilitator, Sunny Guidotti (UNICEF LACRO) along with a reminder of the ground rules and a recap of Day 2. This was followed by a synopsis of the agenda for Day 3.

### 2. Summary of Day 3

The IFRC and the WASH Cluster from Burkina Faso and Iraq provided an overview of the core principles of partnerships including equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity through a series of country case studies from Burkina Faso, Iraq, and the Philippines. The presentation also highlighted examples of internal and external partnerships, identifying the different stakeholders engaged in partnerships. DSS and Vitens Evides International (VEI), on the behalf of UNHCR, Uganda, and the National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Uganda presented an example from Uganda on collaboration between the private sector and water utilities to deliver essential water services in the refugee settlement in Rwamwanja. Another example from Sudan was presented by the Netherlands Red Cross and Aveco de Bondt from the Um Rakuba refugee settlement and the partnership and technical expertise provided by the private sector. Both case studies highlighted the benefits of partnering with the private sector and the creation of an institutional set-up that strengthened local service providers by sharing technical expertise to build a bridge with the humanitarian sector, resulting in an international community of practitioners. A short survey was carried out with participants rate the extent to which cluster coordination addresses each of the core principles and the results were the following:

Principle of partnership	To what extent does cluster coordination address it? Rating from 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely)
Equality	3.2
Transparency	3.5
Results-oriented	3.6
Responsibility	3.3
Complementarity	3.2

The presentations set the scene for the working group session aimed at identifying different aspects related to partnerships and the role of key stakeholders. The participants were divided into five groups :

- Core principles: moderated by the WASH Cluster Coordinator, Iraq
- Coordination: moderated by the WASH Cluster Coordinator, Burkina Faso
- Private sector: moderated by DSS with a presentation by Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation (DCHI)
- Partnerships: moderated by IFRC
- Donor relations: moderated by FCDO

The group work for the private sector focused on a call to action by the participants and set the scene for a series of follow-up workshops to be co-convened by DSS and DCHI with support from the GWC.

### 3. Wrap up and Evaluation

The Lead Facilitator provided a short wrap-up and summary of Day 3 (included below). The real-time evaluation highlighted a high level of satisfaction amongst participants, with 73 per cent indicating that the session and content met their expectations, with partnerships being the main takeaway from the day.

It was also interesting to note that participants cited key components to effective partnerships as coordination, transparency, equality, balanced power dynamics, complementarity, compromise, trust, understanding, and mutual benefit.

## 4. Key Recommendations

Based on Day 3 discussions, the key recommendations for the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 are:

- The core principles of partnerships are the building blocks to the services provided by WASH actors to communities (as our core clients). This takes an inclusive and participatory approach, that is accountable to the Grand Bargain commitments;
- Shifting our mindset and changing our perspective on partnerships, recognising communities and local actors as central to partnership and to bridging the humanitarian and development nexus and moves us towards sustainability;
- The critical role that coordination plays in fostering and cultivating partnerships with different stakeholders to support predictable, timely, and high-quality WASH responses (e.g. expertise, surge, technical guidance);
- Recognition that the private sector has strong potential to innovate and be a catalyst to strengthen the capacity of the sector (call for action);
- Localisation should be at the heart of partnerships, working with and through communities and local actors is the future;
- The "added value" of taking a multisectoral approach to enhance synergies and increase the impact of responses for affected populations; and
- Strengthening the partnerships between local actors and donors is a must for effective responses, recognizing that this requires investing in capacity and resources over multiple years.

## Day 4 – Leadership

**Sessions Objective:** Present current leadership and governance models and the visioning of future leadership arrangements, roles, and responsibilities

**Lead Facilitator:** *Omar El Hattab, UNICEF WASH PD*

Full presentation available [here](#). Access all Day 4 materials [here](#).

### 1. Opening and recap of Day 3

A short welcome was provided by the Lead Facilitator, Omar El Hattab (UNICEF WASH PD) along with a reminder of the ground rules and a recap of Day 3. This was followed by a synopsis of the agenda for Day 4.

### 2. Summary of Day 4

A motivational speech was given by Paul Knox-Clarke, an independent consultant and researcher with a wealth of knowledge on leadership and coordination based on the research conducted during his time with the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Paul shared his valuable insights on what leadership means in the humanitarian sector and for effective coordination. This touched upon humanitarian leadership not being based on a traditional hierarchical model and that there is no one leader, as there are many different stakeholders involved. From the research conducted, it has been found that good leadership reflects the ability of all stakeholders to coordinate effectively and collectively channel efforts towards a common goal.

This is based on common ground including well-defined targets and standards that are agreed upon with clear roles, responsibilities for each stakeholder. It was also highlighted that good leadership is defined by achievements, not the process in which these are achieved, and that it is rooted in effective coordination. The video of the interview can be accessed [here](#).

This was followed by a panel discussion to reflect on different leadership models at global, national, and sub-national levels and the role and responsibility of a diverse array of stakeholders, ranging from UN agencies, national governments, local and international NGOs.

The panelists included:

- Kelly Ann Naylor, Associate Director – WASH PD, UNICEF
- Abdul Malik Temory, WASH Cluster National Co-lead, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development (MRRD), Afghanistan
- Olga Caballero Bernal, Dirección social, TECHO, Paraguay
- Jakub Pajak, WASH sector Co-coordinator, ACTED, Whole of Syria

The motivational speech and panel discussion set the scene for the working group session aimed at identifying the role and responsibility of each stakeholder in current and in future leadership models for effective coordination and the requirements to fulfill these. The participants were divided into five groups :

- Leadership and coordination: moderated by the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)/USAID
- Leadership and coordination: moderated by Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Leadership and coordination: moderated by the French Water Partnership (FWP)
- Leadership and coordination: moderated by the WASH Cluster Coordinator, Ukraine
- Leadership and coordination: moderated by Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (Elhra)

### 3. Wrap up and Evaluation

The Lead Facilitator provided a short wrap-up and summary of Day 4 (included below). The real-time evaluation highlighted a good level of satisfaction amongst participants, with 64 per cent indicating that the session and content met their expectations, with governments seen as the main stakeholder to take on more leadership responsibility in coordination. It was also interesting to note that participants cited insights on effective leadership around the concepts of shared leadership with an emphasis on stronger local leadership, collective coordination and the individual role and responsibility that each stakeholder has towards coordination, and the complexity around shared leadership and what this means at global, national and local levels.

### 4. Key Recommendations

Based on Day 4 discussions, the key recommendations for the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 are:

- Leadership is most effective when decisions are taken and actioned under shared responsibility and accountability by the collective at the local level;
- Effective humanitarian leadership is coordination – is built on trust and predictability with partners and communities towards a common goal;
- Leadership for effective coordination across global and national levels requires a balanced approach centered on transparency and accountability by the CLAs;
- Using a stakeholder analysis, coordination structures need to re-shape working arrangements centered on the active participation of partners in coordination, that transcends us from individual mandates to a mutual purpose;
- There is a missed opportunity when coordination is not agile, inclusive, people-centered, and as local as possible. Local actors play a key role in empowering communities in decision-making processes to drive the response;
- When humanitarian principles are respected, national and local authorities including service providers should be empowered to maximize their leadership role in humanitarian coordination; and
- Equal and engaged partners in coordination are essential. This takes a "bottom-up" approach, beginning with communities, to coordination, to advocacy, and to influence decision-makers and investors.

## Day 5 – Recap and Next Steps

**Sessions Objective:** Recap on key recommendations on strategy, coordination, partnership, and leadership and a guided brainstorm on additional ideas

**Lead Facilitator:** *Thilo Panzerbeiter (GWN)*

Full presentation available [here](#). Access all Day 5 materials [here](#).

### 1. Opening and recap of Day 4

A short welcome was provided by the Lead Facilitator, Thilo Panzerbeiter (GWN) along with a reminder of the ground rules and a recap of Day 4. This was followed by a synopsis of the agenda for Day 3.

### 2. Summary of Day 4

The GWC's CAST provided an overview of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, highlighting the opportunity that the GWC Annual Meeting has provided to reflect upon strategies, coordination, partnerships, and leadership, as an initial consultation in the six-month process that will be launched in June 2021. The GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 will be elaborated through broad and wide consultation through focused discussions, interviews, online surveys, and webinars with relevant stakeholders from the WASH sector and beyond. The launch of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 will take place in December 2021. The Lead Facilitators from Day 1 – 4 presented a recap of the key recommendations and a short survey was conducted to understand the extent that the main conclusions presented from each day provide a foundation for the development of the GWC's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025. The feedback from the real-time evaluation highlighted a high level of satisfaction amongst participants across all days (8.25 on a scale of 10). A participatory discussion collected additional comments from participants for each of the topics covered and is summarised [here](#).

### 3. Closing remarks

A summary of the GWC Annual Meeting was provided by the GWC Coordinator, Monica Ramos. This was followed with Closing Remarks by UNICEF Director – EMOPS, Manuel Fontaine. The session was then handed over to the Lead Facilitator for the wrap-up and evaluation.

### 4. Wrap up and Evaluation

The Lead Facilitator provided a short wrap-up from Day 5. The real-time evaluation highlighted a high level of satisfaction amongst participants, with 75 per cent indicating that the session and content met their expectations, with localisation and leadership cited as the most useful aspects of the GWC Annual Meeting. In addition, a majority of participants stating that they learned useful information to be applied in their future work (3.9 on a scale of 5) and that participants rated the experience of an online event as high (4.1 on a scale of 5).

The feedback on how to improve the content of the sessions and the format/organisation of the meeting, the participants cited the need to increase the time for presenters to include more Q & A, to increase time for discussions, to simplify the tasks in the working group sessions, to reduce the use of technology (such as Miro Boards), to reduce the number of days, to increase the length of each session, to decrease the size of the break-out group for the working group sessions, to have designated notetakers for the working group sessions and to increase participation from countries including cluster coordination teams, local partners and NGOs, and the affected population. The full evaluation information is available [here](#).

# GLOBAL WASH CLUSTER

25th Annual Meeting  
Main Event | 19-23 April 2021



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towards a new strategy  
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## #GWC 25 - Thank you all

### Annexes

Annex 1 – [Agenda](#)

Annex 2 – [Participants List](#)

Annex 3 – [Meeting Repository](#)