

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene



Providing adequate water, sanitation, environmental-health and hygiene services is one of today's key public health challenge.

About 2.2 billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, while 3 billion lack access to improved sanitation—leading to 1.7 billion cases of diarrheal disease each year. Even though diarrheal diseases are preventable and treatable, more than 760,000 children under 5 die from them annually. One in four health facilities has no water services, and 10% lack sanitation services.

Most of the world's population faces water insecurity—lacking consistent access to safe drinking water due to extreme weather like droughts and floods, and poor management of water resources. These factors exacerbate scarcity, which can lead to conflict between communities.

Safe water, improved sanitation and safe hygiene are vital for human health and development. Therefore, International Medical Corps strives to meet these key needs, regardless of challenges. As part of our overall health approach, we prioritize preventing diseases linked to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).



Half of the global population lives in water-stressed regions. WASH-related diseases account for half of the hospital-bed occupancy in developing countries, increasing the burden on healthcare systems that are often overstretched. Children who are malnourished and people with impaired immunity are more susceptible to life-threatening diarrhea.

With decades of experience, International Medical Corps implements WASH and infection prevention and control (IPC) interventions in healthcare facilities, communities, schools and displacement camps, as well as during early recovery and development. We collaborate with local leaders to ensure safe drinking water, enhance sanitation, promote hygiene and strengthen IPC measures in health facilities.

WATER SUPPLY

International Medical Corps ensures reliable access to safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, adhering to international standards. We strategically locate communal water points within safe distances from households, to support community health and dignity.

SANITATION

International Medical Corps collaborates with communities to build safe, accessible sanitation facilities that are usable day and night. International Medical Corps works with affected populations and local authorities to design sustainable sanitation solutions that meet immediate needs and support long-term recovery.

HYGIENE PROMOTION

International Medical Corps promotes comprehensive hygiene practices—covering personal, domestic, environmental and food hygiene—to reduce disease transmission. Our behavior-change communication strategies are context-specific and developed in close coordination with communities, ministries of health and the Global WASH Cluster, ensuring cultural relevance and local ownership.

WASH IN HEALTH FACILITIES

International Medical Corps enhances WASH infrastructure in health facilities for continuous access to safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation and hygiene services. Training health workers in IPC measures and safe medical-waste management prevents healthcare-associated infections and bolsters local health-system resilience. Building local capacity is central to our approach, ensuring preparedness for future public health emergencies.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSES

To curb transmission of infectious disease, our WASH team provides safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, advocates for hygiene practices and enforces appropriate IPC measures. Our IPC measures meet all global WASH standards, ensuring safety for staff, patients and visitors. We also utilize risk communication and community engagement strategies to promote disease-reducing behaviors.

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Poor implementation of WASH programming presents major environmental risks in humanitarian activities and can lead to water scarcity, disease outbreaks, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, pollution and waste accumulation. Environmental considerations and asset lifecycles are essential in managing WASH projects. We mitigate risks, support disaster risk reduction and lower vulnerability to natural hazards through effective planning and management.

International Medical Corps is committed to effective environmental management in WASH projects, collaborating with communities and authorities to minimize environmental impact and comply with all environmental standards. By integrating safeguards throughout our projects, International Medical Corps protects health and safety, ensures quality and reduces legal risks. We integrate eco-friendly approaches, such as solar-powered water supply systems, and develop resilient water infrastructure tailored for flood- and drought-prone communities. These interventions include constructing weatherproof WASH facilities, such as elevated latrines, flood-resilient water points and rainwater-harvesting systems designed for water-scarce areas. We also support the establishment and capacity building of community-led water management committees to strengthen local ownership, enhance sustainability and ensure long-term impact.



International Medical Corps delivers lifesaving WASH interventions in community settings and institutional facilities during acute emergencies. Beyond immediate response efforts, we are committed to addressing long-term challenges such as climate resilience, persistent water scarcity and inadequate sanitation.



AFGHANISTAN

International Medical Corps meets critical WASH needs in vulnerable communities through increased water supply, improved sanitation via community-led programs and behavior-change strategies, and family-health action groups for better household hygiene. Our WASH teams work with Afghan communities to raise awareness, distribute hygiene kits and install handwashing stations in health facilities and at-risk areas.

ETHIOPIA

International Medical Corps has built WASH infrastructure in health centers, camps and communities, installing rainwater harvesting systems, water storage containers and purification materials, and rehabilitating local water sources. We work in three camps for Somali refugees, improving sanitation and hygiene access for thousands. We educate refugees on handwashing, latrine hygiene, safe water usage and solid-waste disposal, and train health workers and community volunteers on WASH-related topics.

GAZA

International Medical Corps integrates a robust WASH program into its emergency health services, providing essential services—including safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion—in the field hospitals we have operated since January 2024. Despite water salinity challenges and security constraints, we have successfully deployed water-supply systems—including desalination plants—and maintained high water quality standards through continuous monitoring. Our WASH interventions also encompass solid-waste management, IPC and the distribution of hygiene kits—contributing to a safe and hygienic environment in the field hospitals.

NIGERIA

To improve WASH access for people affected by continued conflict in northeast Nigeria, we lead the WASH Cluster in the local government area of Damboa—which contains six camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs)—and the WASH Cluster in the Bakassi IDP camp in Maiduguri. We provide clean

water to these IDP camps via water trucking and by drilling boreholes that we fit with solar- or hand-powered pumps. We also distribute handwashing stations, soap and disinfectant to thousands of households to prevent the spread of disease.

PAKISTAN

Our WASH program integrates with the health sector to enhance health outcomes by improving sanitation in facilities and schools. Our holistic approach to development emphasizes community management of WASH infrastructure for sustainability. We collaborate with government departments to rehabilitate non-functional water supply schemes. Our reverse-osmosis system rehabilitation has provided safe drinking water to more than 15,000 people.



International Medical Corps implements WASH interventions across diverse settings, including communities, refugee camps, schools and health facilities. Our work spans the full humanitarian spectrum, from emergency relief to recovery and long-term development. We respond to a wide range of crises, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, conflict-induced displacement and other complex emergencies. Across all program phases, we collaborate with communities and local authorities to design and implement sustainable WASH solutions that promote resilience and long-term impact.

SOMALIA

We have rehabilitated solar-powered wells, water points and water-supply systems in response to drought, conflict and floods. We have also installed hand pumps to increase community access to safe drinking water and ensure uninterrupted water supplies at health facilities. We have established WASH committees to ensure that water quality meets minimum WHO standards and to undertake the routine operation and maintenance of water-supply infrastructure. We have constructed gender-segregated latrines and showers in IDP camps and have improved medical-waste management at supported health facilities in Baidoa and Galkayo.



UKRAINE

International Medical Corps has been a critical player in Ukraine's emergency WASH response, addressing the severe infrastructure impacts of the ongoing conflict. Since the full-fledged Russian invasion of February 2022, we have expanded our efforts to support WASH needs and broader infrastructure rehabilitation, particularly in health facilities crucial for millions of Ukrainians. Our comprehensive interventions include emergency water supply, sanitation services and the rehabilitation of WASH facilities in health centers to ensure IPC. Additionally, we have rehabilitated 85 health facilities by renovating bomb shelters, drilling wells and upgrading heating, electrical and ventilation systems—underscoring our commitment to sustaining healthcare delivery in challenging environments.



YEMEN

International Medical Corps has provided essential WASH services to more than 3 million Yemenis since 2012, addressing urgent needs in a country where 17.4 million people—about half the population—require humanitarian assistance. Our efforts include supplying clean water to nearly 800,000 people through system rehabilitation and solar-powered pumps, improving sanitation for more than 1 million people and promoting hygiene among more than 1 million others. Additionally, we focus on building resilience by working with local communities to establish sustainable WASH infrastructure that can withstand weather-related challenges.

ZIMBABWE

Since 2011, International Medical Corps has strengthened WASH capacities in five districts of Mashonaland Central Province. Economic decline has reduced access to WASH services, leading to chronic outbreaks of diseases, including typhoid, dysentery and cholera. Our WASH team has rehabilitated, drilled and solarized boreholes, constructed latrines, improved WASH infrastructure in health facilities and schools, and trained workers in IPC, benefiting nearly 1.3 million people.



www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org

A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster, and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance, and become effective first responders themselves.

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