



## 2025 Call To Action for Survival and Resilient WASH

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### INTRODUCTION

In 2024, 176.6 million people required humanitarian Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) aid—yet only 48 million were given access.<sup>1</sup> By year's end, the humanitarian WASH sector received only 37% of the required funding, with further reduction of global funding for humanitarian and development aid expected. In 2025, the humanitarian WASH sector requires \$3.2 billion, yet only \$212 million—just 6.6%—has been secured.<sup>2</sup> This crisis is compounded by over **\$72 billion in global development assistance cuts**, with devastating consequences for humanitarian response. **This signals a critical shift in the humanitarian financing paradigm and raises alarm over states' responsibility to uphold access to water and sanitation under international human rights law.**

**173 Million**

**PEOPLE IN NEED  
OF HUMANITARIAN WASH  
ASSISTANCE**



**83 Million**

**PEOPLE URGENTLY TARGETED  
FOR HUMANITARIAN WASH  
ASSISTANCE**



**6.6 %**

**FUNDING RECEIVED (\$212  
MILLION OF \$3.2 BILLION  
REQUESTED)**



The shrinking of global humanitarian aid **directly threatens the lives and dignity of those living in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected (FCV) settings**, where the consequences of poor WASH access are most severe. Eighty percent of diseases in crisis contexts are linked to unsafe water and inadequate sanitation, and disruptions to WASH services only deepen instability, prolong displacement, and increase aid dependency. **Coordinated emergency responses continue to deliver critical WASH services even as access, funding, and protection of infrastructure become increasingly difficult.** This leads to an additional 70 million people in immediate need facing the devastating consequences of suspended humanitarian WASH programs in over 30 countries.

<sup>1</sup> Global WASH Cluster 2025, [HNRP 2024 Dashboards](#)

<sup>2</sup> UNOCHA 2025, Financial Tracking Service, May 2025, [2024 Coordinated Appeals](#)

To help overcome these challenges, humanitarian actors leading WASH responses across the world joined their forces and created the **WASH RoadMap (WRM)** in 2020, which aims to **empower the humanitarian WASH sector with the capacity and resources to deliver a qualitative response at scale, anywhere and anytime.**<sup>3</sup>

In 2023, alongside the UN Water Conference, this collective launched a [Call To Action for Survival and Resilient WASH](#), a global advocacy initiative from WRM members mirroring field realities, which obtained the support of over 230 humanitarian and development actors across the world. **Four countries signed the Call: Switzerland, France, Chad, and Slovenia.** France formally endorsed the call at the One Water Summit on 3 December 2024.<sup>4</sup>

The renewed 2025 Call to Action is supported by the **Global WASH Cluster**, which plays a critical role in **leading and coordinating effective and accountable humanitarian WASH responses in crises.** Led by UNICEF, and mandated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, it represents more than 1,100 humanitarian actors in over 30 countries.

**The 2025 Call to Action takes into consideration the shifting paradigm in humanitarian financing, the increasing needs in growing FCV contexts, the progress shown over the past two years for the WASH sector, especially the 2023 UN Water Conference and the nomination of the Special Envoy for Water in 2024** (which was one of the 2023 CTA claims). This is a reminder of the need for urgent, coordinated, and principled action to strengthen advocacy for humanitarian and development WASH in FCV settings.

The Humanitarian WASH sector,<sup>5</sup> through this Call To Action, urges **governments, donors, humanitarian and development stakeholders to prioritize survival WASH responses, especially in FCV settings.**

**Water is not optional.** It is a human right and a lifesaving asset, enabling humanitarian responses in health, nutrition, security, shelter, protection, and education. Safeguarding this right demands **bold, sustained, and accountable leadership** from the global community.



<sup>3</sup> [What is the WASH RoadMap?](#)

<sup>4</sup> [One Water Summit](#)

<sup>5</sup> 46 WASH Roadmap members, 97 Global WASH Cluster members and over 1,100 field-level partners, 114 French Water Partnership members, 30 German WASH Network members, and 29 Coalition Eau members



## 1. REAFFIRM COMPLIANCE WITH HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES BY ALL ACTORS

*Humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence are crucial to maintaining the effectiveness, legitimacy, and safety of humanitarian operations.*

Today, humanitarian principles are challenged by political interference, security risks, and funding constraints, undermining the safety of humanitarian staff and beneficiaries.

In 2024, the record number of 377 humanitarian workers were killed across 20 countries, and many more were injured, kidnapped, and arbitrarily detained. Almost 95 per cent of those killed were local aid workers.<sup>6</sup>

Targeted attacks on aid vehicles, staff, and critical WASH infrastructures show deadly violations of neutrality.

The increasing assistance access denial, especially in Gaza, Yemen, Afghanistan and Mali<sup>7</sup> to date, also violates the humanitarian principles.

Government agendas, often reflected in donor priorities and conditionalities, can also compromise neutrality, distorting needs-based responses, putting already vulnerable populations at greater risk.



### We call upon:



- **Governments and other relevant actors to strictly adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, as well as to secure unhindered access to humanitarian aid, as a prerequisite,**
- **All actors are to ensure humanitarian principles lie at the core of their mandate and to strengthen their capacity to monitor and report violations during their operations,**
- **All actors are to align their aid in accordance with the level of needs, and**
- **WASH actors, guided by the principle of “do no harm,” to engage with communities and assess risks to avoid exacerbating tensions or creating new vulnerabilities in fragile settings.**
- **The United Nations system to lead by example in reinforcing neutrality and principled action, ensuring system-wide alignment through the Humanitarian Reset and in the context of the UN 80 reforms, with stronger accountability to affected populations and the core of humanitarian action.**

<sup>6</sup> Joyce Msuya, Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, quoted by Reliefweb, 02/04/2025

<sup>7</sup> UN Security Council 9594<sup>th</sup> meeting, 3 April 2024

## 2. INCREASE SUPPORT FOR THE WASH SECTOR, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

*Resilience should be secured through a systemic approach of the sector. This includes funding local humanitarian responses and coordination, funding the humanitarian HDP agenda, and improving the capacity of the sector (HR, local agencies support, institutional frameworks, etc...).*

The alarming humanitarian funding gap observed during the first trimester of 2025 is connected to the global cuts on the Overall Development Assistance (more than 72 billion USD on 15th April 2025<sup>8</sup>), which has a direct and deadly impact on Humanitarian Assistance.

Benefit-cost ratios of interventions to attain universal access to improved water, sanitation, and hygiene are proven: for every \$1 invested in basic drinking water, there is a \$4.3 average economic return, which increases to \$5.5 when invested in basic sanitation.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, investing in coordination brings high returns by reducing duplication, improving targeting, and enhancing the impact of limited resources. Ensuring the use of minimum standards and context-adapted technical guidance further enhances this return by enabling cost-effective, fit-for-purpose solutions that deliver sustainable impact and long-term value for communities.



### We call upon:



- **Current ODA and emerging donors, governments, and the private sector to substantially increase funding for humanitarian response and coordination (especially to support the critical role of National Coordination Platforms),**
- **Humanitarian and development WASH donors to channel and prioritize funding for FCV contexts,**
- **Humanitarian and development WASH donors to consider flexible and predictable multi-year funding, with considerations of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the climate and environment agendas, and**
- **Humanitarian and development WASH donors to recognize localization as a core principle, enabling strategic partnerships and strengthening the leadership of local actors, including Women-led and Human Rights organisations, in humanitarian WASH responses.**

<sup>18</sup> OECD 2025 – ODA [Data Explorer](#)

<sup>19</sup> WHO 2012, [Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage](#)

### 3. SYSTEMATICALLY TARGET WASH EFFORTS TO AREAS WHERE WASH RISKS AND NEEDS ARE CRITICAL

*Primarily among populations living in FCV settings, in countries where WASH clusters/sectors are already activated, and where there is no humanitarian access.*

FCV contexts experience the most severe humanitarian crises, where lack of clean water and sanitation exacerbates suffering, disease, gender-based violence and mortality. WASH service breakdown amplifies conflict and instability, fuelling grievances, leading to further violence<sup>10</sup> (including physical assault, brutality, and increased protection concerns), displacement, and unrest.

In 2025, 309 million people around the world need humanitarian assistance and protection, due to conflicts, climate emergencies, and other drivers.<sup>11</sup>

Still in 2025, approximately 800 children under age 5 will die daily from preventable diarrheal diseases linked to inadequate WASH services and infrastructure.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, inadequate WASH contributes to approximately 50% of global childhood malnutrition cases and is responsible for the deaths of around 1,000 children under 5 every day.



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#### We call upon:

- All actors to systematically target WASH efforts to areas where needs are most acute, based on a collective understanding of needs, through joint data frameworks like the WASH Insecurity Analysis<sup>13</sup>
- All actors are to ensure the needed policy shifts, funding strategies, coordination-led mechanisms, and operational adaptations take place, to ensure they prioritize WASH responses in FCVs, and
- All actors are to elevate humanitarian WASH in global crisis response planning and resource allocation, recognizing its central role in survival, dignity, and recovery and in relation to health, nutrition, food security, education, and protection outcomes.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR 2024, [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> UNOCHA Global Humanitarian Overview [Report](#) 2024

<sup>12</sup> WHO/UNICEF, 2023

<sup>13</sup> [WASH Insecurity Analysis](#), GWC, UNICEF, ECHO 2024



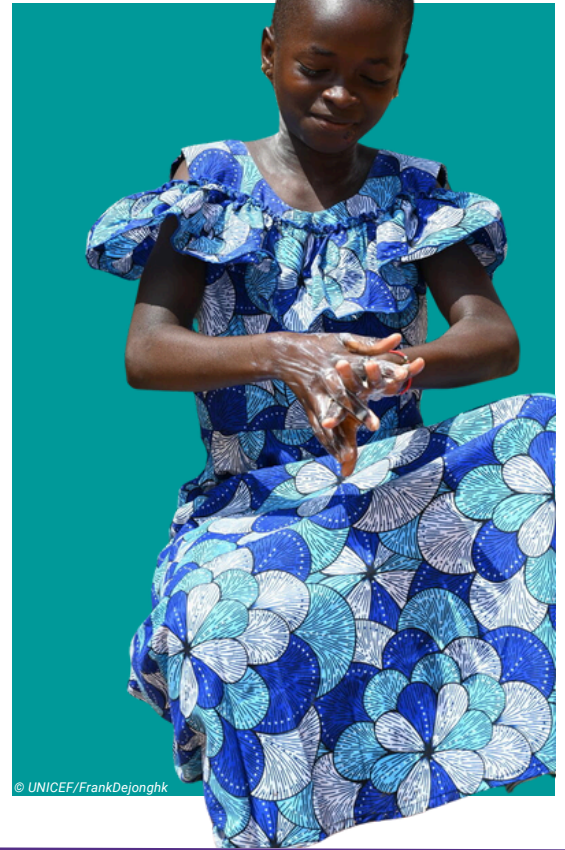
## 4. CALL FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

*Compliance with International Humanitarian Law relating to the protection of WASH systems, personnel, and civilians is an obligation of all states and parties to armed conflicts. International Humanitarian Law, when respected, is an efficient tool for de-escalation, creating space for negotiations towards peace.*

More than 180 million individuals in armed conflict areas suffer from the destruction, misuse, or devastation of water resources.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, in 2024, approximately 137 attacks took place monthly on health care facilities, in FCV settings.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, civilian casualties in armed conflicts surged by 72% in 2023.<sup>16</sup>



### We call upon:



- **Member States and parties to the conflict to respect and ensure respect of IHL according to the Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols, customary international humanitarian law (and the Geneva List of Principles on Water Infrastructure, when it comes to water infrastructures, workers and to humanitarian staff), the EWIPA declaration, and other initiatives on the protection of WASH services and infrastructure**
- **All parties to the conflict to ensure their members are trained in IHL, including on the protection offered to the WASH sector,**
- **All actors to collect and share data on disruption of services or attacks against WASH infrastructure, civilians, humanitarian workers, their impacts and their knock-on effects, and barriers to access in FCV settings, promoting an evidence-based accountability.**
- **All actors to support qualitative conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity, and peacebuilding by promoting the identification and exchange of good practices to protect WASH infrastructure during armed conflict, and**
- **All actors to support efforts to safeguard WASH infrastructure, ensure the delivery of spare parts, and train humanitarian staff in conflict-sensitive approaches.**

<sup>14</sup> Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, Report of the 2023 workshop

<sup>15</sup> WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA)

<sup>16</sup> UN Stats SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

## 5. REINFORCE AND SUSTAIN GLOBAL WATER GOVERNANCE

*A strong global water governance is a prerequisite to advancing humanitarian and development agendas. This governance aligns with national priorities, holds a strategic agenda implemented through accountable and dedicated mechanisms, such as UN Water Conferences and a Water Envoy.*

Forty-six years after the first UN Water Conference, in 1977, the second intergovernmental conference on water was held in 2023.

Alongside this event, a UN Special Envoy on Water was appointed on 13 September 2024 (which was one of the 2023 CTA claims), the first UN System-wide Strategy on Water was adopted, and two further UN Water Conferences are mandated for 2026 and 2028.

We recognize existing global mechanisms that help frame global humanitarian strategies, such as:

- the 2005 Humanitarian Reform,
- the 2012 Transformative Agenda,
- the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda),
- the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and
- the 2025 Humanitarian Reset.



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### We call upon:



- **UN Member States to hold regular and decision-oriented Water Conferences in coordination with other UN and non-UN conferences, with strong accountability mechanisms (tracking commitments and sharing results). Those conferences should ensure the representation of civil society and water stakeholders in the event and in the preparation of the agenda,**
- **UN Water Conferences co-hosts to include humanitarian WASH in the conference agenda with a specific focus on financing FCVs, basic human right principles, and IHL, humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and climate vulnerability, and**
- **The UN Special Envoy for Water to proactively engage with humanitarian stakeholders, ensuring their specific needs are reflected in response planning, coordination mechanisms, and fully integrated into the political agenda of the WASH sector.**

# ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

- CALL TO ACTION 2025 [Comms Toolkit](#) and [Canva Assets](#): use the social media cards and join the communication campaign on social media and share through your networks!
- [GWC Advocacy Toolkit](#): Find country-level tools and resources to develop advocacy strategies, tactics and messages for collective action.
- [World Water Week 2025](#)
- [UN Water Conference 2026](#)

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- [2020 WASH RoadMap Strategy](#).
- [Global Alliance to Spare Water infrastructures from Armed Conflicts](#)
- [Global WASH Cluster 2022-2025 Strategy](#).
- [Global WASH Cluster Collective Outcomes](#)
- [Global WASH Cluster Advocacy](#).

## TO SIGN THE CALL

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Want to get  
involved?

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