

WASH Pledge: Guiding principles

A business commitment to WASH



In collaboration with

WASH
4WORK



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Foreword

Today, over 785 million people are still without access to safe drinking water, another 2.2 billion lack safely managed drinking water services and an estimated 4.2 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation services.¹ This is incompatible not only with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's (WBCSD) [Vision 2050](#), where nine billion people are able to live well within the limits of the planet, but also with the United Nations (UN) human right to access to drinking water and sanitation. Accelerated action is urgently needed to address these issues.

There is a compelling and clear economic case for businesses to demonstrate leadership by addressing this situation. Many businesses have operations, employees, contractors and customers in countries lacking access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Economic, social and environmental impacts of not having access to WASH can lead to various illnesses and fatalities, impair productivity and restrict markets for some products and services.

The business cost arising from preventable WASH-related diseases alone can be significant.² Public health and resilience of local and global economies is seriously affected by these negative impacts on human resources, not to mention by the serious environmental damage caused to water polluted by untreated human waste. It need not be this way: it is estimated that for every USD \$1 invested in water and sanitation, USD \$4.3 is generated in returns through avoided costs, a

healthier population and increased productivity.³

A proposed first step in accelerating business action is for companies to commit to WBCSD's Pledge for Access to Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH Pledge). This Pledge aims to have businesses commit to securing appropriate access to safe WASH for all employees in all premises under direct company control.⁴

This publication includes a set of guiding principles that will support companies in their efforts to implement WASH at the workplace – an essential first step for businesses supporting global objectives related to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. This document also provides guidance and tools to help businesses assess their WASH conditions at the workplace, as well as along its value chain, including suppliers and surrounding workplace and/or worker communities.

As you read through the guiding principles and begin to assess and implement WASH within your operations, we encourage you to share your experiences with us so that others can benefit from what you have learned. In this rapidly evolving global economy, where social license to operate, reputational risk and access to natural resources have become increasingly important to success, WASH should be a key aspect of any company's sustainability strategy.

Forward-looking businesses are transitioning from water management to addressing sustainability, which includes addressing WASH, water scarcity

and quality, within their operations and across their value chain, in all global markets. As employers and members of society, we encourage businesses to commit to the Pledge to ensure appropriate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for their own employees, thus making a direct contribution to addressing one of the most pressing public health challenges of our times.

On behalf of the WASH4Work partners.

Background

The original WASH Pledge was developed by WBCSD in collaboration with its partners and published in 2013. The Pledge focused on companies making a commitment to address WASH in all premises under direct company control within three years. Companies were also encouraged to advocate for WASH across their value chain, employee homes, communities and supply chains. This updated version retains the original purpose of the WASH Pledge. Additionally, it includes a revised assessment tool with indicators that will enable companies to clearly measure their progress and find gaps in WASH access. The Pledge also provides additional information and tools to support companies in addressing WASH along their value chain and communities and move beyond advocacy – to assessment and implementation.

Summary

WHAT IS THE WBCSD WASH PLEDGE?

Access to drinking water and sanitation is a human right. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 focuses on ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation for all, with an emphasis on improving the standards of WASH services through increased treatment, recycling and reuse of wastewater, improved efficiency and sustainable withdrawals, and protection of water-related ecosystems, in an integrated approach to water resource management. Universal access

necessitates that workers also have access to water, sanitation and hygiene services at their places of work. The WASH Pledge provides a tool for companies to ensure access to WASH at the workplace, along their value chains and in the communities in which they are located and where their workers live. For companies signing the WASH Pledge, this document outlines a process to achieve the established standards or “points of reference” for WASH at their work sites. It also provides critical information on why WASH is a business imperative, the benefits of WASH, not only to businesses but also

to the health of their workers and the broader environment, and the potential risks of inaction. The WASH Pledge is one among several approaches to making improvements to WASH in workplace settings. Other approaches include the [WASH4Work](#) initiative, and the International Labour Organization’s [WASH@Work handbook](#). Businesses are encouraged to explore these resources to increase their understanding, as well as learn about other tools available to them to support their assessment and implementation efforts.



Introduction

PROVISION OF ACCESS TO SAFE WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE: A BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

Companies can make direct improvements to productivity and employee morale, as well as public health and wellbeing, by providing and maintaining safe drinking water, appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities, combined with education and awareness-building activities. The latter can also provide the impetus for improvements in the larger community and thus make an impact on a much broader scale. The tangible business benefits associated with improved access to safe WASH at the workplace include:

Healthier and more productive employees

- 60 % of global diarrhea deaths were attributed to unsafe water, inadequate hygiene and sanitation in 2016.⁵
- Loss of productivity to water and sanitation-related diseases can cost countries up to 5 % of their GDP.⁶

- Adequate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at the workplace is associated with decreased absenteeism, reduced workplace accidents, improved productivity and an increase in available workers.
- Reduction in water-related illnesses lead to reduced short- and long-term healthcare costs for employees and employers.⁷

Demonstration of leadership by businesses

- Accelerating programs to increase access to safe drinking water and sanitation in both rural and urban settlements was one of four key business water messages at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).⁸
- Ensuring workplace water, sanitation and hygiene contributes to achieving international objectives such

as the UN SDGs and the UN human right to water and sanitation.⁹

Expanded markets, and more vibrant existing markets, for products and services

- It is estimated that for every USD \$1 invested in water and sanitation, USD \$4.3 is generated in economic returns through avoided costs and improved productivity.¹¹ Countries with higher percentages of the population with access to safe water and sanitation are likely to enjoy higher growth.
- In developing countries, providing safe drinking water to an additional 10 % of the population increases per-capita GDP growth by more than 2 % per year.¹² This increase in economic value can lead to more healthy consumers with a disposable income.



Stakeholder engagement to achieve common goals

- Implementing access to safe WASH for employees, surrounding communities and the value chain can allow companies to align their engagement efforts with their sustainability programs, and lead to intangible benefits such as improved public perception and increased brand value.
- Collaboration with local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and other businesses on access to safe WASH can help companies implement best practices and align their environmental

strategies with public policy objectives and drive multi-stakeholder initiatives towards common goals.

Potential risks associated with inaction

Water and sanitation have emerged as a prominent business and public sector issue in recent years, driven by the lack of access to clean water and sanitation, interruptions in business operations and food production, climate change and increasing disclosure of water risks.¹⁷ According to the CDP Global Water Report 2018, 75 % of respondents identify a broad array of water-related risks as being substantial to their business, up from 59 % in 2011.¹⁸ Therefore, in addition to

highlighting business benefits, it is also important to highlight the risks associated with inaction:

At premises under direct company control:

Increasing costs

Inherent in providing safe access to WASH, is a reliable and consistent supply of clean water. Water loss in the system may be one of the biggest threats to providing access to clean water and proper sanitation, as well as a substantial cause of rising costs for water providers and water users. These higher costs can be a barrier in some regions, leading to reduced access to water and sanitation services.

The human right to water and sanitation

Of the world's estimated population of almost eight billion, five billion have mobile phones, but four billion lack access to safely managed sanitation services.¹³

Only 3.4 billion use sanitation facilities that are connected to sewers where wastewater is treated or where excreta is disposed, and 673 million still defecate in the open.¹⁴ The countries where open defecation is most widely practiced also have the greatest childhood mortality, the highest levels of under-nutrition and poverty, and the most significant wealth disparities.

On 28 July 2010, through Resolution 64/292, the UN General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.¹⁵ This was further defined by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme specifically for residential purposes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. SDG 6 calls for universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water,

access to adequate sanitation and hygiene for all and an end to open defecation by 2030. SDG 6 also addresses water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, protection of water-related ecosystems and expanded international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities. As a result, efforts to improve WASH access, which had primarily been focused on improving access to households and schools, have now extended to healthcare facilities and most recently to workplaces.¹⁶

Globally the estimated water loss is 32 billion cubic meters per year and among developing countries, the economic value of water loss is over USD \$3 billion per year. Lack of access to sanitation also generates very high costs. For example, in India, the total economic impact of inadequate sanitation amounted to USD \$53.8 billion in 2006.¹⁹

Across the broader value chain:

Loss of license to operate and reputational risk

Access to water and sanitation was formally recognized as a human right by the UN General Assembly in July 2010 and by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in September 2010. In March 2011, the UNHRC released

a report providing important guidance for companies and their obligation to respect human rights, including the right to water and sanitation (the 'Ruggie Principles').²⁰ This obligation means that businesses should act with due diligence to avoid infringing on the rights of others and to address the adverse impact of their activities. Given society's expectation that businesses respect human rights, failure to comply with this guidance could result in loss of social license to operate.

- Water demand is increasing, especially in developing countries where economic and population growth are challenging already scarce water resources. Perceived misuse of water resources can negatively impact businesses and possibly

result in revoking a company's social license to operate within certain communities.

- Increasingly, companies understand the connection between reputation and social license to operate. As a result, companies are focusing on addressing issues traditionally considered external to their business, such as access to clean water and sanitation. By addressing issues critical to the communities in which they operate, companies can not only support the SDGs, but also reduce reputational risk and enhance their brand.

Learn more on the [business case for WASH](#) in the workplace and case studies at the [WASH4Work initiative](#).



WBCSD Pledge for access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right and key to the UN SDGs – yet today two billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and an estimated four billion do not have access to managed sanitation services.²¹ Addressing this vital human and socio-economic development issue is key to achieving WBCSD's Vision 2050 of “more than nine billion people living well within the limits of the planet by 2050.”

Many businesses have operations, employees, contractors and customers in regions lacking safe water and sanitation. The economic, social and health consequences of this cause sickness and death, impair productivity, and restrict markets for some products and services.

Global businesses can lead the way to significantly increase the number of people who have access to safe, affordable and sustainable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene by providing adequate access at their own premises.

Leadership in access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene provides opportunities to improve employee health, satisfaction and productivity. It also represents a strong call from the business community for other stakeholders to act and put an end to these unacceptable conditions.

By signing this Pledge, companies commit to implementing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in the workplace at an appropriate standard

for all workers in all premises under direct control within three years. Under the Pledge, companies are also encouraged to address WASH across their value chain, including among their suppliers, as well as in the communities that surround their workplaces and/or where their workers live.

They also commit to championing such access among peers within their industry.

Visit the [WBCSD WASH](#) site to sign the Pledge.

Guiding principles

These guiding principles will support companies in the implementation of the Pledge and provide:

- A suggested process for companies to follow to provide access to safe WASH for employees through existing water stewardship, health and safety and other internal processes.
- Agreed points of reference on what represents leading practice in providing access to WASH in different workplaces.

- A tool to facilitate self-assessment by businesses against global benchmarks.
- Suggestions for awareness and behavioral change activities to ensure the effectiveness of WASH interventions.
- Examples of potential economic benefits of improving access to safe WASH for employees.

The guiding principles are not designed to be a step-by-step manual to direct the daily decisions and actions of a manager on the ground.

Rather, they are designed to provide guidance on the types of questions managers should be asking, and to help them develop a process for answering these questions and acting upon the results.²² Including these actions in existing internal processes such as health and safety activities ensures that the WASH Pledge is not just a one-time activity, but integrated into overall company practices and policies, which will support sustainable effort. As you read through this document and begin to implement WASH within your operations, we encourage you to share your journey with us so that others can benefit as well.

GUIDANCE ON WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE AT THE WORKPLACE

This section outlines a suggested process for companies to follow (see Figure 1) in providing safe water, sanitation and hygiene in premises under their direct control.

Figure 1: Steps to implement WASH at the workplace



Step 1: Establish baseline conditions in countries of operation

The first step in the WASH implementation process should be determining the current state of access to WASH within the company's countries of operation. The following resources can assist this process, and provide other data on water use and stress:

- [Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Joint Monitoring Programme 2017 update and SDG baselines](#)
- [UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water](#) (GLASS) 2019 Report (See Annex for a summary of GLASS 2018/2019 Country Survey responses and data, as well as link to country data in the Excel spreadsheet.)
- [Water Use and Stress Data](#): This data will help companies determine priority action areas.

Step 2: Perform self-assessment

The next step of the assessment process is to understand the current status of WASH provisions provided at premises under direct company control. This will help identify gaps compared to WASH leading practices.

Use the [WBCSD WASH Pledge self-assessment tool](#), as a checklist for a corporate-wide survey to understand the WASH practices being implemented at each of the premises under direct company control.

The tool is aligned with the WASH at the workplace points of reference section (page 13), and can be used to evaluate the performance of each facility or workplace area (e.g. agricultural setting or mine), by comparing its current status to leading practices on WASH.

Step 3: Prioritize gaps

The self-assessment tool's output is a gap assessment that provides insights on areas that should be addressed immediately (0–2 years), in the medium-term (3–5 years) and over the long-term (> 5 years) to improve WASH performance within operations and across the value chain.

Prioritize the gaps by referencing the following dimensions:

- Difference between company performance, and leading practices.
- Severity of risks associated with inaction.
- Ease of achieving improvements.

Step 4: Develop and implement improvement plan

After the gaps have been prioritized, use a decision tree (Figure 2) to develop an action plan to address them. The decision tree should focus first on compliance with local and national laws and regulations related to WASH practices. However, companies are encouraged to go beyond compliance by developing internal practices that could be considered best practices.

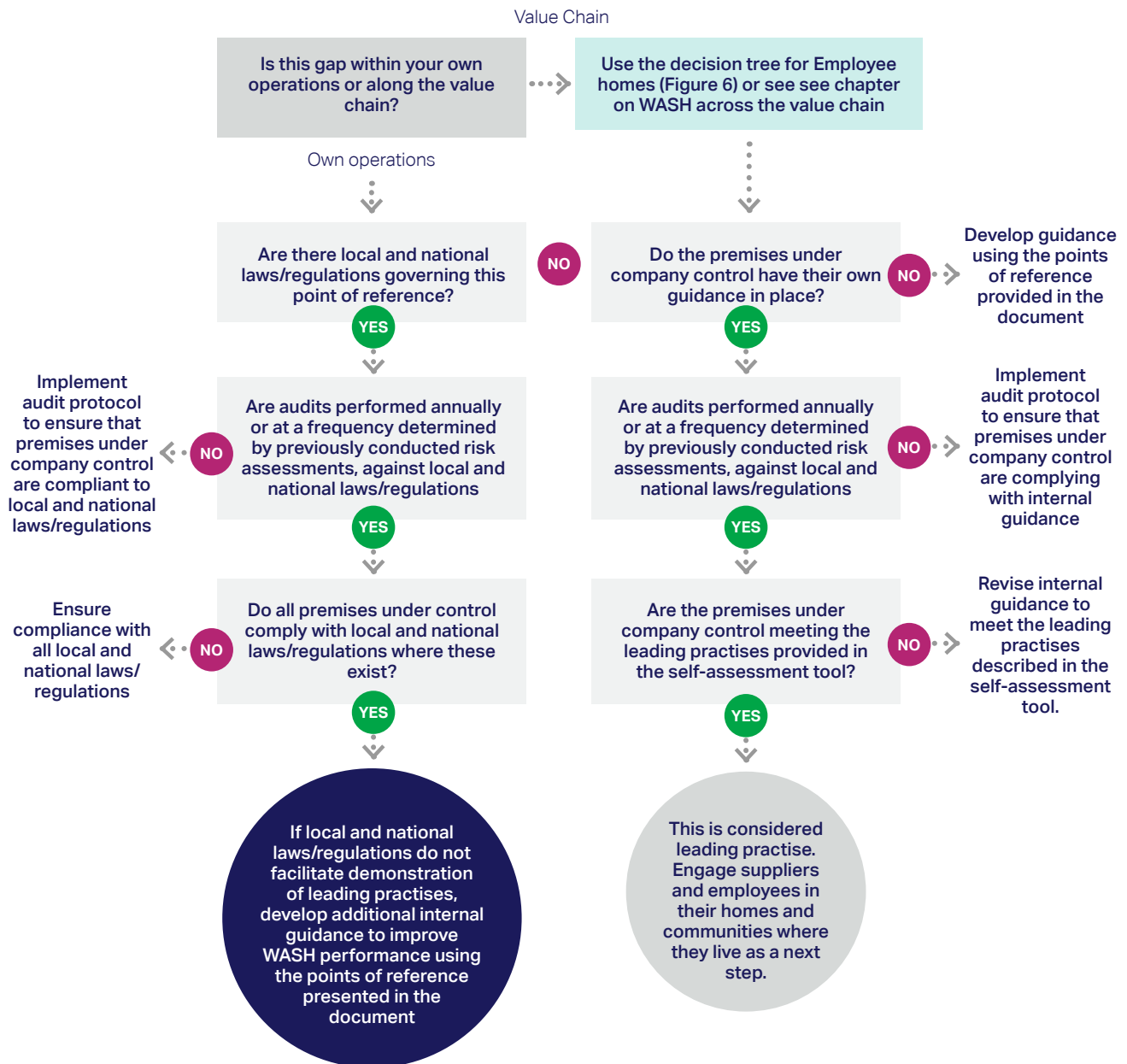
Once the improvement plan has been developed, companies can focus on implementation to address gaps across all premises under direct company control. To help ensure the long-term success of WASH programs, the actions outlined in these improvement plans should be integrated into existing company policies and procedures so that WASH becomes an integral part of company operations.

Step 5: Monitoring, disclosure and communication

To ensure best practices are sustained, regular audits, performed annually or at a frequency determined by the company, should be used to monitor performance. It is recommended that companies disclose progress made in implementing access to safe WASH at premises under their direct control at least annually, to employees, and in public reporting and communications. It is also critical that monitoring is conducted at the corporate level to measure progress and validate the business case for WASH. Disclosure and communication demonstrate commitment and give companies a platform to showcase the benefits of increased access to safe WASH. Such disclosures can also give companies legitimacy to call for improvements in surrounding communities.

The complete list of signatories to the Pledge are featured on the [WBCSD WASH Pledge site](#).

Figure 2: Steps to develop and implement improvement plan



WASH at the workplace: points of reference for WASH Pledge self-assessment

This section covers points of reference for best practices in providing safe water, sanitation and hygiene in different workplaces. These points provide the background to each of the questions that a company should address in its assessment under the WASH Pledge. Other approaches to assess WASH at workplaces include the [WASH4Work Baseline and Monitoring Indicators](#) and the [ILO WASH@Work: A Self-Training Handbook](#).

1. GENERAL

1.1 Compliance with local and national laws and regulations: All workplace facilities and premises under direct company control must comply with existing local and national laws and regulations. Where laws and regulations do not exist to govern a specific point of reference, the company should develop internal guidance that meets or exceeds the laws and regulations of the most stringent country in which it operates, and/or applicable international standards.

1.2 Policies and procedures for temporary and mobile work sites, including agriculture: WASH provisions sufficient for the prevention of public health risks and in compliance with local and national laws and regulations must be in place for temporary and mobile work sites. WASH provisions should also be included in contracts for third parties and contractors.

1.3 Policies and procedures for other work site facilities: WASH policies are in place for facilities including day care facilities, creches, canteens, kitchens or health clinics that are used by workers at places of work.

1.4 WASH monitoring mechanisms: Facilities should have adequate mechanisms in place to monitor and assess the functionality of WASH systems, per regulations and standards. Ideally businesses should have data on baseline conditions such as on provisions responding to the WASH needs of women and those with disabilities, to ensure that the adequacy of facilities for all workers can be tracked.

1.5 Mechanisms to measure impact: Businesses should have procedures in place to measure the impact of the WASH Pledge activities (on workers and business) and improvements in WASH facilities. How businesses do this can vary based on their capacity, partnerships, available data and resources. This could be accomplished via activities such as conducting research with a partner or university, surveys, or focus group discussions with workers.



2. WORKPLACE WATER SUPPLY

Drinking water stations should be disinfected at a minimum of once every two months or at an increased frequency if heavily used.

2.1 Availability of sufficient, free, physically accessible drinking water: Sufficient and physically accessible drinking water must be provided to all employees, including those with disabilities, at the workplace.²³ Water should always be available at a convenient distance for employees and available to provide for all drinking, sanitation and hygiene needs. Water should be free of charge for employee use at the workplace. Employers that allow employees to take water home for domestic use may charge an affordable price.

2.2 Access to safe water that meets quality standards: Drinking water from an improved water source²⁴ should be available to all workers, and water quality should be sufficient to prevent public health risk, per government standards. If a raw water source does not meet standards it should be treated before being consumed by workers. Water taste should be palatable, or acceptable, to workers to encourage them to rehydrate as needed. Safe method(s) for the provision of drinking water

(clean water fountains, vessels or coolers) should be in place for all workers to use. Drinking water should be taken from the storage vessel or source in such a way that hands, cups or other objects cannot contaminate the water. Improvements that make the water supply safe, more convenient, and reliable, such as the provision of a regulated water supply through a workplace connection, are strongly encouraged.²⁵

2.3 Drinking water stations are clean and appropriately disinfected: All drinking water fountains, water coolers and other storage vessels and sources should be positioned in appropriate areas and cleaned, recharged and disinfected regularly to ensure that all risk of contamination and infection is avoided. Drinking water stations should be disinfected a minimum of once every two months, or more frequently if heavily used.

2.4 Drinking water testing to ensure quality and safety: Drinking water and drinking water facilities should be examined regularly by trained and qualified staff to ensure that only water that is safe to drink is consumed. Drinking water should also be tested immediately upon changes in environmental conditions, an outbreak or an increase in incidence of waterborne diseases.²⁶ Those responsible for staff training should be well versed in local water quality standards, as well as the [WHO Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality](#), and experience and skills in observation, sampling and water quality analysis.²⁷

If the full guidelines cannot be enacted, companies should at least institute initial testing, particularly for pathogens and other common risk elements, and address any issues through treatment or improving water sources. If water quality tests indicate that water does not meet standards, workers must be notified, and measures taken to bring it up to standard.

2.5 Regular inspection, cleaning, maintenance and conservation of water: Appropriate provision must be made for the regular cleaning of all water supply systems. Water supply systems should be cleaned a minimum of two to four times per year to maintain the safety of the drinking water.²⁸ Regular inspection, maintenance and repair of water supply and drainage facilities need to be conducted to ensure they are in proper working order. Water supply systems should be inspected at least annually, and any required maintenance or repairs should be performed at that time. More frequent maintenance and repairs should be conducted if changes to water flow or quality are detected. Water-saving technologies such as low-flow/dual-flush toilets, waterless urinals, water-efficient faucets and showerheads should be deployed within facilities and other relevant work areas to conserve water used by operations and workers.

2.6 Water supply in other areas: If the workplace provides day care facilities, canteens/kitchens and health clinics, these facilities should also have sufficient and safe drinking water.

3. WORKPLACE SANITATION

Toilets must be designed considering requirements of local customs, religious and social traditions, and specific gender needs.

3.1 Access to adequate, improved and convenient toilet facilities: The company ensures that all workers, regardless of work location (e.g., office, factory, agricultural and other outdoor settings) have access to adequate toilet facilities such as a flush or pour-flush toilets, septic tank, pit latrine and ventilated improved pit-latrine. Facilities should be in line with local customs, religious and social traditions. For agricultural sites, portable toilets are appropriate when properly maintained, including the safe removal and disposal of waste. An appropriate number of properly constructed toilets and urinals must be provided at a rate of two toilet seats and two urinal facilities per 45 male workers, and four toilet seats per 50 female workers.²⁹ Facilities must have toilets that are accessible to workers with mobility challenges such as the disabled and elderly workers, adequate enclosures to provide gender separation, protection from weather and exclusion of insects and vermin. The toilets must have appropriate ventilation in place to remove odors for users and others in proximity.

3.2 Wastewater, drainage, toilet and urinal waste management safety: All washbasins, sinks, showers, toilets etc. must be provided with adequate drainage and disposal systems. Drainage and disposal systems should be designed to rapidly and cleanly remove wastewater from where it is produced, provide vector control and prevent contamination in the immediate vicinity and the broader environment through adequate off- or on-site treatment facilities. Toilets and urinals must be designed and constructed to ensure the safe removal of urine and excrement, with collection and disposal that does not create a danger to health or the environment, i.e., treated before it is returned to the environment or conveyed into a municipal sewer system. (See [JMP Facility types](#) for more.)

3.3 Toilet and urinal lighting and safety: Appropriate provision must be made in the design and construction of facilities to ensure adequate permanent lighting for safety purposes (200 lumens per square meter – lux),³⁰ and all toilet doors can be locked.

3.4 Toilet and urinal cleaning and maintenance: Provisions must be made for regular inspection, maintenance and repair of toilet facilities to ensure they are in proper working order. All toilet facilities must be cleaned at least once a day, with extensive cleaning, i.e. disinfection, at least once a week. Toilet facilities should be inspected at least monthly and any required maintenance


or repairs should be performed at that time. More frequent maintenance and repairs should be conducted if issues are reported by employees. Systems must be in place for workers to report cleanliness and maintenance issues.

3.5 Sanitary products and disposal: Facilities for safe disposal of sanitary products must be provided in women's toilet facilities. Feminine care products should be discarded in waste containers that are properly lined with plastic, wax paper or other appropriate bags to protect others from coming into direct contact with soiled products.³¹ Sanitary products should be available at the work site for purchase in vending machines, or free of charge.

3.6 Medical waste disposal: Appropriate provisions for the safe disposal of medical waste must be provided. Blood, urine and other bodily secretions should be disposed of in red bags specifically made to hold contaminated medical waste that is considered a biohazard. Scalpels, sharps and needles, as well as broken lab glass, should be placed in specially made sharps containers that display medical waste warning labels.³²

3.7 Sanitation facilities in other areas: Areas such as childcare facilities, canteens, kitchens or health clinics should also have in place adequate, improved, convenient toilet facilities.

4. WORKPLACE HYGIENE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE



Regular training and awareness-building processes should be implemented for all employees.

4.1 Personal hygiene and handwashing facilities: All toilet and washroom facilities should have appropriate handwashing facility provisions including clean water, soap and mechanisms for drying, to ensure personal hygiene.³³ Non-potable water used for washing must be clearly indicated at the point of use.

4.2 Appropriate handwashing behavior and awareness: Signage for hand-washing practices should be provided, including technique and for critical times. Critical times for handwashing include: before food preparation and eating; and after using the toilet, cleaning babies' bottoms, contact with bodily fluids, and contact with any potential contaminants.³⁴ Hand-washing technique includes use of water and soap or ash, washing both hands, rubbing hands together at least three times, and drying hands hygienically – by air drying or using a clean cloth or paper.³⁵ (See next chapter on educational and behavioral change activities for suggestions)

4.3 Showers and bathing facilities: Where the nature of the work necessitates showering before leaving the workplace (e.g., work involving contamination hazards or dusty, dirty, hot or strenuous workplaces), all showers and bathing facilities should be equipped appropriately. One shower should be provided for every 10 employees of each gender, or a numerical fraction thereof, who are required to shower during the same shift. Body soap and other appropriate cleansing agents should be provided in convenient proximity to the showers. Showers should be provided with hot and cold water feeding a common discharge line and employees who use showers should be provided with individual clean towels.³⁶

4.4 Hygiene training, WASH awareness and behavior change: Regular training, awareness-building activities and behavior change processes should be implemented for all workers. Special emphasis should be given to workers and others involved in food preparation. Hygiene training should be given to all new employees, and current employees should undergo annual refresher courses in WASH expected in the workplace. Awareness-raising activities should be conducted during occurrences such as disease outbreaks and changing environmental conditions (e.g., flooding) that could affect worker health. Topics of importance include food safety and hygiene for

workers involved in worker food preparation, safe drinking water, hydration and health, sanitation, proper use and cleanliness of facilities, proper handwashing practices, menstrual hygiene and water conservation.

4.5 Personal protective equipment (PPE) provision: Appropriate PPE should be provided to all those involved in the cleaning and maintenance of toilet washrooms and associated facilities. These individuals should wear PPE, such as gloves and non-slip rubber soled shoes at all times, especially when cleaning urinals, toilet bowls, showers, hand basins, mirrors and other associated facilities.³⁷ Provisions must be in place to clean and store PPE so that it is not taken home to expose workers' families and communities.

4.6 Training for cleaning and maintenance staff: Those involved in cleaning and maintenance of WASH facilities should be trained in correct techniques and the proper use of all cleaning materials to protect their own health, that of others, and the integrity and safety of the installations and the environment. Employers should ensure that workers and relevant contractors follow the specific instructions associated with each cleaning product.

4.7 **Cleaning equipment**

storage: Cleaning equipment and materials should be stored in appropriate conditions and in places dedicated for this purpose. Facilities should have a dedicated cleaning products storage location outside common areas, that meets the needs of the guidelines on cleaning supplies packaging.

4.8 **Monitoring and reporting on water-related diseases:**

Monitoring and reporting of WASH-related diseases at the workplace under direct company control should be implemented and in collaboration with local and national public health bodies. This is particularly important at work sites handling food and beverage and medical care.

5. **VALUE/SUPPLY CHAIN WASH**

5.1 **WASH policies for company's main value/supply chain workplaces:**

Policies and provisions for public disclosure are in place that outline expectations for water, sanitation and hygiene in sites that are part of the value and supply chain.

5.2 **Promote implementation and monitoring of WASH:**

If companies have WASH policies in place for their supply/value chain businesses, they also must have a strategy in place to implement improvements. Companies should promote WASH self-monitoring among their supply chain, to measure change and progress towards identified expectations.

6. **COMMUNITY WASH**

6.1 **Community WASH**

assessment: Businesses are also encouraged to assess and address the WASH conditions where their workers live and/or in the communities that surround their workplace. This approach starts with undertaking at least one of three levels of assessment:

Level 1 – collection of community household secondary WASH data from reports.

Level 2 – collection of community household secondary WASH data directly from government and community organizations.

Level 3 – collection of community household primary

WASH data directly from households in the community, or from workers on their home access to WASH.

6.2 **Community WASH**

action plan: Following an assessment, the company should develop a plan of action to address its findings. The extent to which the findings are addressed is up to the workplace and should ideally be done in consultation with community members and workers, and with government and other partners with WASH expertise. The company should then establish a system to monitor its implementation efforts.

6.3 **Environmental impact of workplace WASH operations on the community:**

Companies are encouraged to assess and address the impact of their workplace WASH practices on the local environment and monitor its implementation efforts.

Educational and behavior change activities

This section provides suggestions for educational and behavior change activities to support the sustainable adoption of appropriate hygiene practices by employees.

While it focuses on how companies can improve sanitation and hygiene behaviors through education at their own premises, the same principles can be transferred both downstream to employees and their communities and upstream to suppliers. Providing comprehensive educational and behavior change training to employees can help ensure that workers:

- Are aware of the importance of water quality and its relation to health, both at work and at home, and the need for safe water supplies.
- Accept the need for a proactive response when someone does not follow standards.
- Understand their role in the surveillance process.

- Have the necessary skills to perform this role.

Changing behaviors with effective education campaigns

An effective health education campaign has the following essential characteristics for achieving long lasting behavioral change:³⁸

- Promotes actions that are realistic and feasible within the constraints faced by workers.
- Builds on ideas and concepts that people already have, in addition to common cultural practices.
- Is repeated and reinforced over time using different methods.
- Uses existing channels of communication.
- Attracts the workers' attention.
- Uses clear, simple language and local expressions, and

emphasizes the short-term benefits of action.

- Provides opportunities for dialogue and discussion to facilitate learner participation and feedback.
- Uses demonstrations to show the benefits of adopting the recommended practices and allows participants to practice and participate in learning sessions.

For detailed information on how to implement a hygiene program, refer to the [WHO Fact Sheets on Hygiene Education](#). Additionally, for guidance on behavior change strategies, refer to the [WHO Behavior Change Strategies and Health: the Role of Health Systems](#) or the [WHO Fact Sheets on Sanitation - Focusing on Key Behaviors](#). In light of the 2020 COVID-19 virus pandemic, the WHO technical brief on [water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for COVID-19](#) provides guidance relevant for viruses (including coronaviruses).



Key WASH topics to educate and change behavior

There are three major hygiene behaviors that need to be engrained in employees to ensure a sustainable WASH program:

- **Protection of drinking water supplies:** Ensuring water supply that is free of fecal contaminants and water-related diseases is essential to maintaining health. Preventing source water contamination is often easier and less costly than treating contaminated water. Therefore, it is necessary to change behaviors that lead to potential contamination of primary drinking water sources (such as open

defecation, open wastewater disposal, improper industrial waste disposal), to treat water in the home when it is suspected of being contaminated, and to use clean water containers for water distribution and drinking.

- **Use of latrines:**³⁹ All employees should use the provided toilet facilities and any contrary behavior needs to be addressed.
- **Hand washing:** Proper hand washing practices is an effective way to stop the spread of infection. The poster shown in Figure 3 can be used to promote proper hand washing technique.⁴⁰

Additionally, workplaces are encouraged to educate workers on other areas critical to WASH in the workplace including:

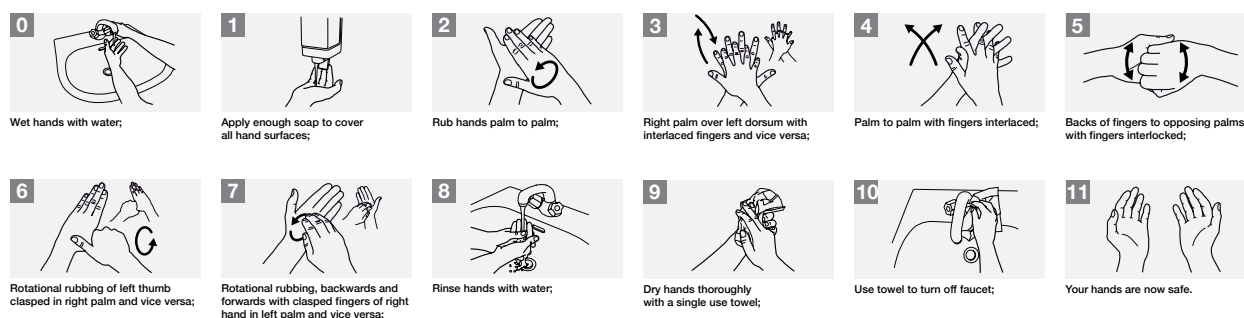
- Water conservation
- Menstrual hygiene
- Safely managed sanitation (fecal sludge management), particularly for workers involved in maintaining sanitation facilities.
- Safety education related to handling hazardous material, managing worker exposure to hazards including adequate cleaning facilities for workers exposed to hazardous waste.
- Water conservation and water pollution prevention awareness. [The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 'We're for Water' campaign](#) can serve as an example.

Figure 3: WHO guidance on correct hand washing technique

HOW TO HANDWASH?

WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB

Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds



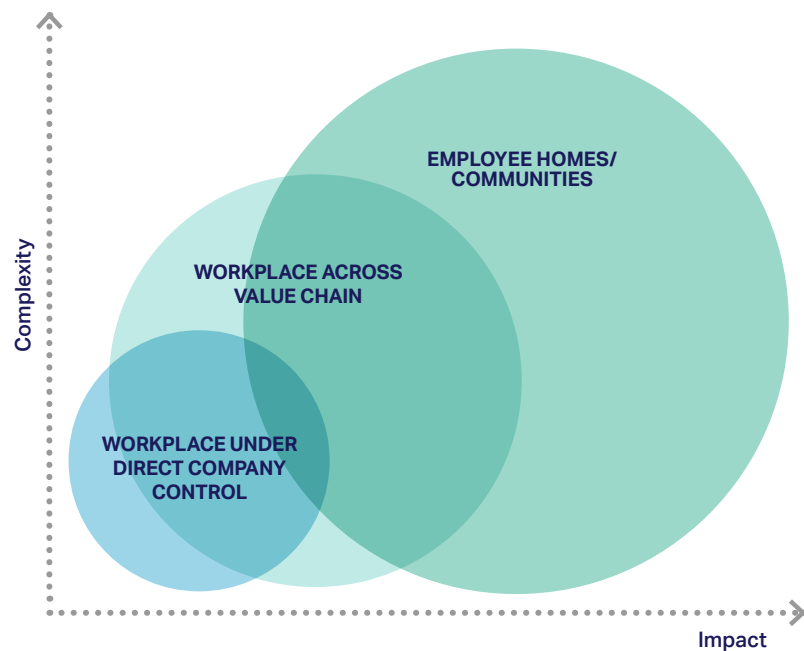
WASH across the value chain

The human right to water and sanitation is a universal right for all people, including workers at their place of residence and those operating upstream in the value chain.

'Value chain' refers to all upstream and downstream activities associated with the operations of the reporting company. This section includes a plan to move from implementation of WASH at a company's own premises then across its value chains and finally within employee homes and communities (see Figure 4).

The plan also includes monitoring, evaluation and disclosure to demonstrate action by individual companies. This represents a high-level overview of value chain engagement. Businesses are encouraged to visit www.wash4work.org to see what other businesses have undertaken in their value chains.

Figure 4: From implementation at the workplace to the value chain and employee homes/communities



As illustrated in Figure 5, the first step to improve WASH practices across the value chain involves developing a supplier code of conduct that complies with local and national laws and regulations and includes the WASH points of Reference provided in this document. The supplier code of conduct should also strive to comply with the leading practices provided in the [WASH Pledge self-assessment tool](#) for business. After the code of conduct is developed, businesses should work to promote WASH implementation and monitoring in their value chain, with the

value chain partners ultimately responsible for implementing and, at a minimum self-monitoring, their WASH activities.

Benefits of monitoring includes the ability to address specific issues needing corrective action, an increased understanding of capabilities and the ability to make improvements as needed.

We would encourage business to also include its Tier 1 suppliers of raw materials and purchased goods and services under the WASH Pledge.

Tier 1 suppliers are companies with which the reporting company has a purchase order for raw materials, components, goods, services, or manufacturing related to the production of products or services sold by the reporting company.

Value chain partners should be encouraged to identify areas of non-compliance with their internal code of conduct and safe WASH provision. Companies are encouraged to work directly with their suppliers to develop a plan of corrective action to be implemented by the supplier.

Figure 5: Steps to develop an action plan to address gaps in the value chain



The suggestions for educational and behavioral change activities in the preceding chapter of this document should be utilized to improve WASH performance.

Employee homes and communities

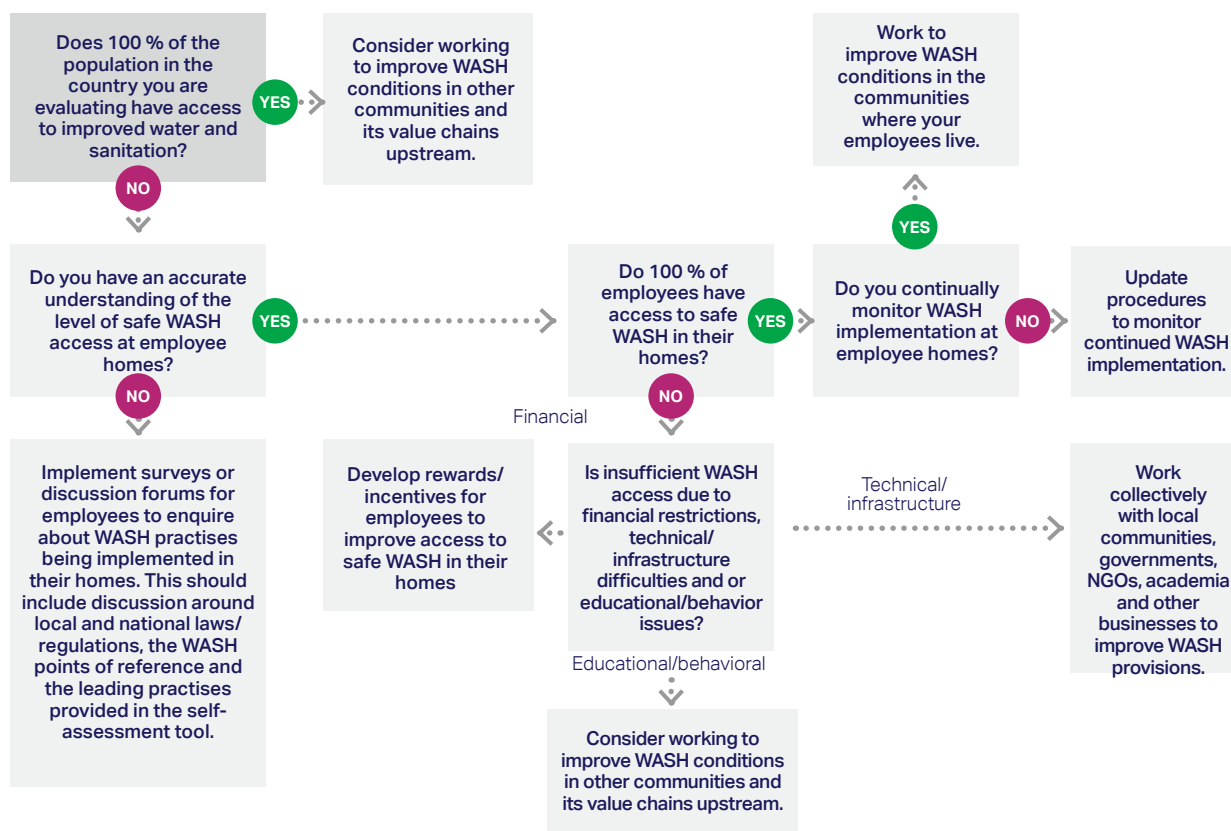
As illustrated in Figure 6, the first step involves determining the percentage of the population with access to safe WASH within a company's scope of operations. If the country being evaluated does not have full access to safe WASH, it is recommended that companies gauge the level of

access in their workers' homes and communities. This can be undertaken using available data and reports; discussion with governments and organizations with knowledge of conditions; and collecting information directly from households and communities.

If less than 100 % of workers and the communities where they live have access to safe WASH in their homes, the business is encouraged to formulate a plan to identify and address gaps. The plan should be informed by the assessment process, including identifying reasons for households

not having access, such as financial, technical or infrastructure issues, and educational and behavior change issues. The plan to address gaps may include: developing rewards and incentives for workers to improve access to safe WASH at home, partnering with local communities, governments, NGOs, academia and other businesses to improve WASH provisions and distribution and implementation of educational and behavioral change materials and activities.

Figure 6: Steps to develop an action plan to address gaps in WASH access at employee homes and communities



Following any interventions by a business or its partners, companies should continue to monitor their workers and/or community's level of WASH access over time to measure change in access, implementation issues, and whether interventions are being sustained. WASH facilities require regular maintenance to ensure effective operation and sustainability, and this should be addressed in WASH implementation plans as well.

Disclosure and communication

Companies are encouraged to provide a summary of their WASH Pledge efforts to WBCSD. However, companies must report their assessment findings, actions and results internally, and develop a mechanism to monitor implementation and progress within established company operations. It is recommended that companies disclose progress made in access to safe WASH across their value chain at least annually in public reporting or communications. Disclosure and communication demonstrate commitment and give companies a platform to showcase the

benefits of increased access to WASH provisions. It can also give companies legitimacy to call for improvements in surrounding communities. Given the interdependence between companies and surrounding communities within watersheds and the environment, disclosure and communication can also provide investors with a better understanding of how a company is working to mitigate risk, preserve essential water resources and maintain its social license to operate.

See the dedicated [WASH Pledge section on the WBCSD website](#) for more resources, including business case studies on WASH Pledge implementation.

Any interventions the company undertakes should be guided by best practices in the WASH sector and work to move households to higher levels of service to support achievement of the SDGs. For example, any constructed toilet facilities should ensure that users are

prevented from having contact with fecal waste contents, and that there is a method in place for waste to be safely managed. Businesses are encouraged to partner with WASH sector professionals and governments to determine interventions that are appropriate for the

communities in question. For key household questions and definitions for water, sanitation and hygiene facilities see the JMP's [Core questions on water, sanitation and hygiene for household surveys](#).

WASH Pledge self-assessment tool for business

The self-assessment tool can be used by companies to evaluate the implementation of access to safe WASH at the workplace in comparison to WASH Pledge leading practices. It can help identify areas for improvement, and support decision-making regarding investment and priority action. Please note that utilizing the tool is not a requirement for being a signatory.

The structure of the self-assessment tool is aligned with the WASH at the workplace points of reference. Once completed, it provides an overall rating for each of the categories below as well as an overall rating for the assessed facility or workplace location.

- General
- Workplace Water Supply

- Workplace Sanitation
- Workplace Hygiene
- Value/Supply Chain WASH
- Community WASH

The WASH Pledge self-assessment tool can be downloaded [here](#).

How to use the self-assessment tool:

- Under each of these categories, there are dimensions for the company to rate their current workplace WASH conditions. Each dimension can either be "individual" or "multi-variable".
- Using the guidelines for scoring for each dimension, companies can then rate themselves between 0-2 using the drop-down menu based on their current performance.
- For multi-variable categories, the final rating is determined by a cumulative score of the associated

variables, each of which are rated as either yes = 1, no = 0 or n/a.

- After completing the assessment, the tool will generate a cumulative score for each category, an overall score and a gap analysis (See "Summary Output" tab on the tool).
- Dimensions that are rated as n/a do not affect a company's WASH Pledge score.
- A column is provided in the tool for companies to add comments related to the scoring for internal purposes.

Once the gaps are identified, the company should identify recommendations to address the gaps and prioritize them (See Guidance on WASH at the workplace) as those that need to be addressed immediately (0–2 years), in the medium-term (3–5 years) and over the long-term (> 5 years) to improve WASH performance within operations and across the value chain.

You can find more detailed instructions under the "Cover" tab in the tool.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are a directional reference for companies working to implement access to safe WASH within their own operations. They are not designed to be overly prescriptive, as every company and country faces unique challenges relating to the work environment. Some level of interpretation of these definitions is required by individuals more familiar with specific issues.

Acceptable: At a level sufficient for the prevention of public health risk. Water should be of an acceptable color, odor and taste for personal use. All water facilities and services must be culturally appropriate and sensitive to gender, lifecycle and privacy requirements (UNDESA, 2005-2015).

Accessible: Everyone has the right to water and sanitation services that are physically accessible within, or in the immediate vicinity of, the household, educational institution, workplace or health institution (UNDESA, 2005-2015).

Affordable: Water, and water facilities and services, should be free of charge for employee use at the workplace. Employers that allow employees to bring water home for domestic use (not required), may charge an affordable price.

Appropriate level of standard: Standards for access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene exist in different cultures and locations. Key issues – such as compliance

with local and national laws and regulations, male and female needs, special needs of disabled people, and regular cleaning – must be addressed. Specific guidance from appropriate bodies, such as WHO and the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), exists on the minimum level of drinking water quality, toilet design and maintenance, and hygiene to ensure a sanitary and healthy environment (see WHO Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality – Fourth Edition, and OSHA Occupational Safety and Health Standards, General Environmental Controls: Sanitation) (WHO, 2017) and (US Department of Labor, 2011)

Basic hygiene: Availability and use at critical times of a handwashing station, soap and water for handwashing.

Improved sanitation:

An 'improved' sanitation facility is one that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact. Access takes into account all improved sanitation facilities, be they privately or publicly owned, and includes: flush or pour-flush toilets to a piped sewer system, septic tanks or pit latrines; ventilated improved pit latrines; pit latrines with a slab; and composting toilets. 'Unimproved' sanitation, defined as such due to being unsafe or costly or non-private, includes: flush or pour-flush toilets to elsewhere; pit latrines without a slab or open pits; buckets; hanging toilets or hanging latrines; and no facilities or bush or field. In this document, we refer to 'safe' sanitation, taking into account disposal

and treatment to ensure overall environmental health, and 'safety' rather than 'improved' sanitation, which is limited to ensuring hygienic separation of human excreta from human contact (see <https://washdata.org/monitoring/methods/facility-types>).

Improved water: An improved drinking water source is one that, by nature of its construction or through active intervention, is protected from outside contamination, in particular from fecal matter. It can be privately or publicly owned, and includes piped water into a dwelling, plot or yard; public tap or standpipe; tube well or borehole; protected dug well; protected spring; and rainwater collection. Unimproved water supply, defined as such due to being unsafe or costly, includes: an unprotected dug well; unprotected spring; cart with small tank or drum; tanker truck; bottled water; and surface water (e.g., river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, irrigation channels). In this document, we refer to 'safe' water, taking into account overall water quality, rather than 'improved' water, which is limited to ensuring the safety of the water source (see <https://washdata.org/monitoring/methods/facility-types>).

Leading practice:

A leading practice is a set of guidelines, ideas, processes or methodologies that represents the most effective way of achieving a specific objective. A leading practice is one that has been demonstrated to work well and produce quality results and

is therefore recommended as a model. The essence of identifying and sharing leading practices is to learn from others and to re-use knowledge.

Mobile work site: Mobile work is characterized by routine and regular travel to conduct work in customer or other work sites, as opposed to a single authorized alternative work site. Examples of mobile work include site audits, site inspections, investigations, property management and work performed while commuting, traveling between work sites, and on temporary duty.

Permanent facility: A permanent facility refers to something that is built, installed or established to serve a specific purpose.

Pledge: A formal promise or agreement to do or refrain from doing something.

Points of reference: Indicators used to orient and assist in understanding a situation or communicating with someone.

Premises under direct company control:

All company-owned and leased premises where employees are located while engaged in their work, including but not limited to offices, commercial buildings, operational plants, factories, warehouses, laboratories, retail locations, offshore operations, mobile and temporary work sites, and land (e.g., agricultural fields). These are workplaces where implementation of access to safe WASH is under direct control of the company. Companies whose core business includes activities such as construction or mobile work sites, as well as contractors, need to give appropriate attention to the temporary or special arrangements that such activities may require.

Safe WASH: Meeting the standards of safely managed drinking water and safely managed sanitation (see below) and basic hygiene.

Safely managed drinking water:

Drinking water that is available from an improved water source, situated on premises, available when needed and safe (does not represent any significant risk to health over a lifetime of consumption).

Safely managed sanitation:

The use of an improved sanitation facility that is not shared with other households and where excreta is safely disposed or transported and treated off-site.

Sufficient: The water supply for each person must be sufficient to ensure that the most basic needs are met, and health concerns are minimized (UNESCO, 2005-2015). Water should always be available to employees to provide for all drinking, sanitation and hygiene needs.

Temporary work site:

Any workplace at which the work is realistically expected to last and does, in fact, last for one year or less, or the work is initially expected to last for one year or less, but at some later date it becomes apparent the work will exceed one year (the work is 'temporary' only until the date of the change expectation) (Journal of accountancy, 1999).

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ABOUT WASH4WORK

The WASH4Work initiative aims to mobilize business to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the workplace, in the communities where workers live, and across supply chains. The initiative, a response to the UN Deputy Secretary-General's "Call to Action on Sanitation", enables partners to align, coordinate, and expand existing efforts in this area, while serving as a means for greater private sector engagement in efforts to achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals. See here for more details: www.WASH4Work.org

DISCLAIMER

This research has been compiled in the name of WBCSD. It was drawn almost entirely from publicly available sources, during 2019 and early 2020. The majority of the research was performed in advance of the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Charts and graphs have been redrawn but all rights remain with the authors. This should not be considered a WBCSD report or publication. It has not been reviewed by members and does not claim to represent the perspective or views of the WBCSD membership.

ABOUT WBCSD

WBCSD is a global, CEO-led organization of over 200 leading businesses working together to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. We help make our member companies more successful and sustainable by focusing on the maximum positive impact for shareholders, the environment and societies.

Our member companies come from all business sectors and all major economies, representing a combined revenue of more than USD \$8.5 trillion and 19 million employees. Our global network of almost 70 national business councils gives our members unparalleled reach across the globe. Since 1995, WBCSD has been uniquely positioned to work with member companies along and across value chains to deliver impactful business solutions to the most challenging sustainability issues.

Together, we are the leading voice of business for sustainability: united by our vision of a world where more than 9 billion people are all living well and within the boundaries of our planet, by 2050.

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