



**EVENT REPORT AND  
 PRACTICE-TO-POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**



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## Background

Humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) actors are struggling to overcome risks and address key needs in relation to the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. Whilst HDP actors are often still working in silos, HDP outcomes are linked and require collective solutions. Emerging evidence shows that WASH resilience, sustainability and peace can only be reached through collaboration and coordination.

Under the Humanitarian WASH Roadmap Initiative 3.5, co-chaired by Global WASH Cluster, UNICEF, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) and the German WASH Network, a “Joint Operational Framework: WASH Resilience, Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding” (JOF) is currently being developed. Stakeholder consultation is a key aspect of this process. This includes the perspective of persons who are implementing WASH services in the HDP nexus. Therefore, WASH practitioners from the Africa and Asia regions were invited to participate in two Regional Exchanges on “Building WASH Resilience and Sustainability” to discuss the challenges they face and develop relevant policy recommendations to improve WASH service provision in contexts prone to protracted and recurrent crises.<sup>1</sup>

The following graphic (fig. 1) provides an overview of the process of developing the JOF including key informant interviews, research, global and regional consultations and peer review:

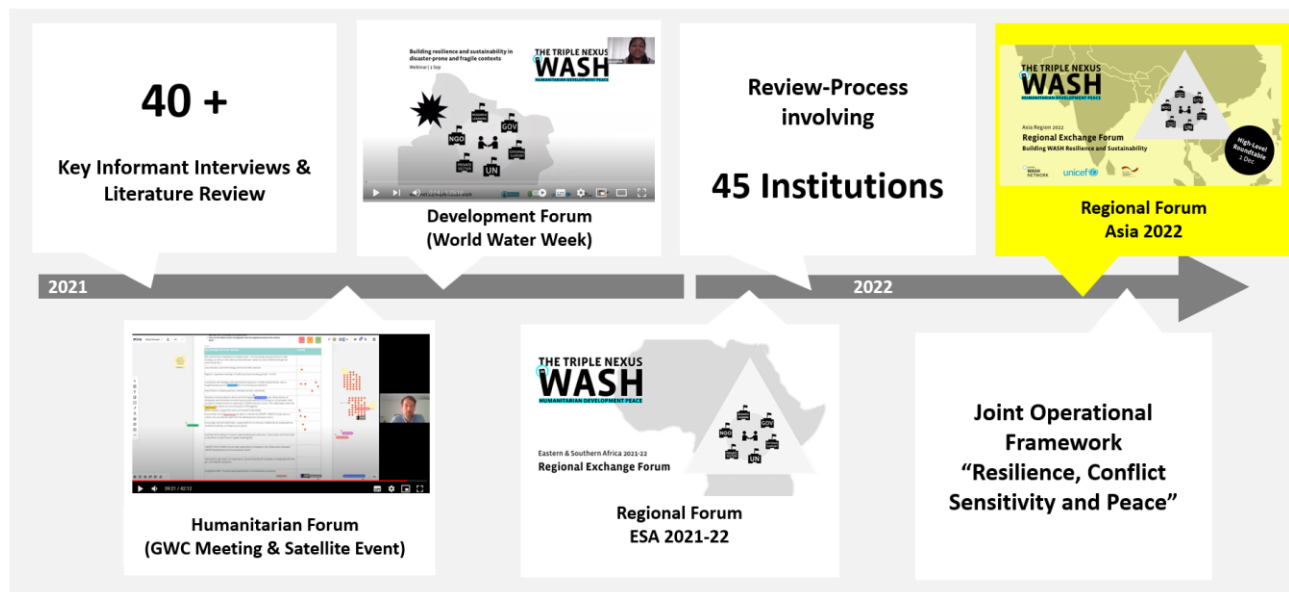


Figure 1 Process of developing the Joint Operational Framework

## Event Rationale

The following report summarises the outcomes of the Regional Exchange Forum “Building WASH Resilience and Sustainability”, held from 29 November to 1 December 2022 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Forum “Building WASH Resilience and Sustainability” consisted of a “practitioner stream”, feeding its results into a “high level roundtable event”. The practitioner stream was hosted and facilitated by Malteser International,

<sup>1</sup> The event report of the Regional Exchange Forum for the Africa region held from January to March 2022 can be downloaded [here](#).

a German WASH Network member, with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office. The event culminated in a high-level roundtable, whose preparation was strongly supported by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the Asian Development Bank.

The results of the Regional Exchanges were used to revise the draft JOF, which is being reviewed by more than 60 sector experts coming from 45 institutions and all relevant constituencies. It is expected to be published in Q1 2023.

## Event Agenda

	Day 1 (Nov 29)	Day 2 (Nov 30)	Day 3 (Dec 1)
All times in NPT	In-Person Event	In-Person Event	Hybrid (onsite & online) Event
Session 1 8:45-10:30	<b>1.1 Welcome &amp; Intro</b>	<b>2.1 Learning Exchange II</b>	<b>3.1 Preparation of High-Level Roundtable</b>
	Welcome Introductions Thematic Introduction	Challenges and Solutions II	Preparation of Presentations Briefing of Speakers / Presenters
Session 2 11:00-12:30	<b>1.2 Region &amp; Context</b>	<b>2.2 Workshop II</b>	<b>3.2 Preparation of High-Level Roundtable</b>
	Formation of Groups Mapping of contexts, risks and challenges	Development of Practice to Policy-Recommendations	Preparation of Presentations Briefing of Speakers / Presenters
Session 3 13:30 -15:00	<b>1.3 Learning Exchange I</b>	<b>2.1 Learning Exchange III</b>	<b>3.3 High-Level Roundtable (hybrid) – 1 pm</b>
	Challenges and Solutions I	Challenges and Solutions III	Welcome Thematic Introduction Presentation of Practice-to-Policy Recommendations
Session 4 15:30 – 17:50	<b>1.4 Workshop I</b>	<b>2.2 Workshop III</b>	<b>3.4 High-Level Roundtable (hybrid) – 3 pm</b>
	Vision to Policy Process Identification of Topics & Key Issues	Grouping, Prioritisation and Fine-tuning of Recommendations	Roundtable Discussion Closing

The practitioner stream was a consultative process, involving 30 practitioners working in eight Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste), who came together for the full three-day event in Kathmandu.



Figure 2 Asian countries represented with participants

## Practitioner Exchange

In preparation of the Exchange Forum, the selected participants prepared case-study presentations with a specific focus on how the triple nexus is relevant in their work. Throughout the three-day event all participants presented, either as a group or individually, and discussed these cases. An overview of the case study presentations are in Annex 1. The cases were used to inspire each-other, as an input for the development of the practice-to-policy recommendations. During the introductions, participants were asked to explain what conflict or tension they would heal, if they had a ‘magic stick’ to do so (see Figure 1).

After, the common risks were mapped through a brainstorming exercise to identify commonalities across contexts and identify linkages across the triple. The most mentioned themes included climate change, related natural disasters and possible disease outbreak, pandemics /epidemics, as well as conflict, as a result of political instability and power dynamics between different cultural and language groups.

With these inputs, all participants took part in a ‘World Café’ and provided their ideas to define problem statements and propose solutions on the following themes, which capture key elements

Figure 3 Magic stick: healing conflicts/tension





of the WASH sector building blocks set out by Sanitation and Water for All, resulting in a wide range of inputs (see Figure 2):

- 1) Resilient WASH services, infrastructure & water resources
- 2) Resilient community WASH behaviour
- 3) WASH policies, laws, guidance and standards linked
- 4) Coordination, planning and information management linked
- 5) Flexible & sustainable financing



Figure 4 World Café: Problems and solutions

The participants of the Regional Exchange Forum split up to start describing the most burning issues they face and present them in plenary to discuss the relevance for all contexts represented. After a first agreement on the selection of issues, the groups drafted policy recommendations related to these issues. The policy recommendations were finalized through a plenary discussion.

## High Level Roundtable

The descriptions of the issues and the developed practice-to-policy recommendations were presented by designated spokespersons of the practitioner stream to a roundtable of eight policy and decision makers from the region at a final hybrid event, held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2022. Three selected practitioner case studies were presented to give context to the practice-to-policy recommendations.

76 Participants attended the event with the following mix of stakeholders: 48% CSO, 24% External Support, 5% Government, 13% Private Sector, 5% Research & Learning, 5% Utilities/ Water Operators. The event

agenda and a list of roundtable participants can be found in the ‘Event Overview’-chapter. This report presents the 5 key practice-to-policy recommendations and consolidates the feedback provided by the high-level roundtable.

## Overview

The final event was opened with a short introduction by Thilo Panzerbieter (Chair, German WASH Network) and with welcome remarks by Peter Harvey (Regional Advisor WASH, UNICEF Regional Office ROSA), followed by a thematic input on the triple nexus in WASH as well as three case studies presented by practitioners.

Session 1		Session 2	
<b>Intro &amp; Rational</b> 	<b>Three Cases</b> 	<b>Policy Recommendations</b> 	<b>High-level Roundtable</b> 
<b>Intro</b> Thilo Panzerbieter	<b>Refugee Response</b> Lasantha Herath Jasper Kiepe	<b>Resilient WASH Service Providers, Infrastructure and Water Resources</b> Merina Maharjan	<b>Operationalise the WASH Triple nexus</b> Mani Ram Gelal Warren Evans
<b>Welcome Remarks</b> Peter Harvey	<b>Cross Border DRR</b> Bhawana Ghimire Nagendra Kumar Singh	<b>Resilient Community WASH Behaviour</b> Swapni Shah	Tayyaba N. Gul Khairul Islam
<b>WASH triple nexus: what’s it all about?</b> Tim Grieve	<b>Inclusion &amp; Youth Engagement</b> Nitish Barole	<b>WASH Policies, Laws, Guidance, and Standards Linked</b> Santosh Dahal	Alexander Humbert Robert de la Serna
		<b>Coordination, Planning, Information Management Linked</b> Tanka Sybedi	Dr. Dol Prasad Chapagain Dr. Pema Gyamtsho
		<b>Flexible and Sustainable Financing</b> Bitush Luthra	Facilitated by Shiva Paudel

## Roundtable Participants

The multi-stakeholder round table consisted of high-level representatives from the Asia region, targeting all constituencies (government, external support, financing institutions, CSO, utilities, private sector). It was facilitated by Shiva Paudel, an Urban Development Specialist and the Asian Development Bank.

<b>Mani Ram Gelal</b>	Secretary of Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS), Nepal
<b>Warren Evans</b>	Special Senior Advisor (Climate Change), Asian Development Bank (ADB)
<b>Tayyaba N. Gul</b>	CEO, Youth Catalyst Pakistan
<b>Khairul Islam</b>	Regional Director South Asia, Water Aid
<b>Alexander Humbert</b>	Regional Water & Habitat Advisor for Asia Pacific, ICRC
<b>Robert de la Serna</b>	CEO, Peace Crops Incorporated Philippines
<b>Dr. Dol Prasad Chapagain</b>	Deputy Manager, Kathmandu Uptyaka Khanepani Ltd. (Kathmandu Water)
<b>Dr. Pema Gyamtsho</b>	General Director, ICIMOD



The High-Level Roundtable was organized as a hybrid event.

## Policy Recommendations

### 1. Resilient WASH Service Providers, Infrastructure and Water Resources

*Spokesperson from the practitioner stream: Merina Maharjan*

**Issue:** Due to limited capacity and accountability of service providers toward resilient WASH infrastructure and standards, people in the Asia region have limited access to safe water and inclusive WASH services. This further increases the vulnerability to climate risks, conflicts and public health emergencies.

## Policy Recommendation 1

By 2030 WASH infrastructure should be designed to be resilient, sustainable, inclusive and responsive to disasters. The policies should be realistic, accompanied with an implementation strategy and a costed plan, including technical design standards and SOPs that should be widely disseminated to and embraced by service providers who are capacitated to implement.

**Response of policy makers:** The panellists agreed that strengthening resilience was critical in ensuring WASH services, water resource management and infrastructure are capable of responding to and adapting to the multiple risks such as flooding, drought, COVID-19 and climate change. To highlight this point, Mr Gelal, the Secretary of the Ministry of Water Supply in Nepal, explained that Nepal had recently launched a new water policy that sought to improve the management of water resources and the delivery of WASH services, given the multiple risks the country faces such as climate change and earthquakes. The other panellists recommended that the WASH sector invests in building redundancy into WASH systems to improve their reliability in the face of shocks and stressors. For example, ensuring alternative water and power supply options are available in the event that the primary sources of water and power are damaged or destroyed due to a shock such as a flood or conflict.

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## 2. Resilient Community WASH Behaviour

*Spokesperson from the practitioner stream: Swapni Shah*

**Issue:** Vulnerable communities, affected by the recurrent humanitarian crises in Asia, are excluded from the planning and decision-making processes and therefore not able to enhance their resilience to disasters or contribute to the development agenda for bettering their well-being.

## Policy Recommendation 2

By 2025, all relevant policies related to WASH in the three (HDP) pillars should include **conflict sensitive participation of affected communities** in identification, planning, implementation and monitoring of the interventions. Policy is communicated to the affected communities in their local language with defined implementation methodologies for their affirmative actions to enhance their resilience.

**Response of policy makers:** The panellists agreed that participation of vulnerable groups, such as indigenous, youth and women, was critical in ensuring peaceful and resilient WASH outcomes in the community. They recommended governments and service providers should better understand all sections of the community, if they are to deliver services that are equitable and lasting, especially in the face of social and environmental risks. Additionally, mobilising these groups, especially youth as agents of change can significantly advance this agenda. Using their skills in communication and technology, youth can assist WASH service providers and authorities to meaningfully connect with communities to ensure services are resilient and equitable.



### 3. WASH Policies, Laws, Guidance, and Standards Linked

*Spokesperson from the practitioner stream: Santosh Dahal*

**Issue:** Weak implementation of WASH policies in the humanitarian and development sectors because of limited ownership and mutual accountability (e.g. limited clarity concerning roles and responsibilities) at different levels of decision making and to the communities, a limited link of budgeting with policy and a focus on response rather than in prevention and preparedness.

#### Policy Recommendation 3

By 2025, strengthen **WASH policy implementation** at national, subnational and local level governments by increasing government ownership, clarifying roles and responsibilities with accountability mechanisms, strengthening the linkage between budget and policy, and prioritizing prevention and preparedness to ensure equitable access to WASH facilities to all.

**Response of policy makers:** The panellists agreed that the emphasis needs to be on policy implementation, as there are numerous policies already in place to improve the resilience of water resources and WASH systems. Additionally, greater implementation and resourcing needs are to be directed to prevention and preparedness, otherwise the impact of future shocks will affect more people and the response will be costlier. The panellists also recommended that representative community participation was critical in policy development and implementation, as all sections of the community should take ownership of WASH services to improve public health. It was agreed that the government needs to play a strong regulatory role and that service providers are included in developing national plans and targets.

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### 4. Coordination, Planning, Information Management Linked

*Spokesperson from the practitioner stream: Tanka Sybedi*

**Issue:** Evidence-based and inclusive sex, age and disability disaggregated WASH information management systems are not strategically streamlined, integrated, centralized and utilized to guide all governance levels and programs, hence interventions often become uncoordinated, ineffective, inefficient, inappropriate and less inclusive.

#### Policy Recommendation 4

Institutionalize a government-led, fully digitized and accessible information management system, informing all Humanitarian Development Peace pillars with relevant data, that is steered and guided by a coordination platform involving all relevant government departments, levels and stakeholders. It should provide disaggregated and quality data. Capacity should be built to utilize and disseminate the data effectively for improved planning and service delivery.

**Response of policy makers:** This recommendation was highly regarded, especially its emphasis on linking data and information management, which would ensure that the WASH sector is tracking vulnerable

groups both in and out of crisis. This will help ensure that no one is left behind, especially during disasters. However, before these systems can be integrated, the panellists recommended that clear accountability needs to be established, as roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines of all parties are well understood. This level of accountability would provide a foundation for effective information management in the WASH sector. Additionally, there was a strong recommendation that humanitarian WASH coordination systems, like the WASH Cluster, are integrated into and led by the government. Finally, capacity building across the WASH sector was discussed as an essential element in understanding why and how to build and manage a linked information management system that improves resilience.

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## 5. Flexible and Sustainable Financing

*Spokesperson from the practitioner stream: Bitush Luthra*

**Issue:** Prescriptive norms followed for funding (including time, budget, sub-granting, and reallocation constraints) are non-responsive to continuously changing political, environmental, social, and economical contexts. This can lead to funds not being utilized in the best possible way.

### Policy Recommendation 5

Starting in 2023, the government, funding agencies and financing institutions working in Asia commit long-term funds and financing mechanisms, which are flexible (reallocation of existing funds, sub-grant restrictions removed) and adaptive to continuously changing political, environmental, social, and economic contexts to ensure timely, effective, and sustainable utilization of funds.

**Response of policy makers:** Long-term flexible funding was agreed upon by all panellists as it is necessary in ensuring that adequate resources are available to provide WASH services to vulnerable populations both in and out of crisis. While acknowledging the constraints that banks and donors have, Warren Evans of ADB stated that long term financing and funding for resilience in the water sector was rapidly increasing, especially related to climate change, providing the example of the new [Asia Pacific Water Resilience Initiative](#) with a \$200 Million goal launched at COP 27. Furthermore, regarding increased flexibility of both funding and financing, he provided cautious optimism that due to the recent surge in climate financing, there would be increasing opportunities to create flexible financing mechanisms in the future. Finally, development banks like the ADB are integrating conflict sensitivity in their social safe guards, thereby setting strong standards for the participation and inclusion of the communities investing.

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## Way Forward

The policy recommendations formulated by the practitioners were met with strong interest from the policy makers during the high-level round table. Widely disseminated throughout the region, these recommendations can inform relevant policy processes. Moreover, the reflections and validated elements of the recommendations will feed into the Joint Operational Framework.

Further consultation and a replication of this process in other geographic regions like MENA presents a huge potential for mutual learning and will hopefully strengthen the operationalisation of the HDP nexus and the WASH sector at large.

## Annex 1 – Case Studies

Case study	Location	Presented by
<a href="#">Providing WASH services in long term refugee camp setting</a>	Thailand: Thai-Myanmar border, Mae Ra Ma Luang & Mae La Oon refugee camps	Lasantha Herath - Malteser International
<a href="#">Prevention of COVID 19 Outbreak in India: Essential Health and Hygiene Interventions</a>	India: Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal	Om Prakash Singh - Save the Children India
<a href="#">WASH O&amp;M in Teknaf Refugee Camp: Operational challenges, beneficiaries demand &amp; solutions</a>	Teknaf Refugee Camp area, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	Jasper Kiepe - Welthungerhilfe & Md. Razwanul Islam – Tomal
<a href="#">Youth Engagement &amp; Leadership for Building Resilience</a>	Pakistan & India	Tayyaba Gul – Youth Catalyst Pakistand & Nitish Barole - Youth for Resilience India
<a href="#">WASH as disaster preparedness action</a>	Indonesia	Ida Ngurah – Plan International
<a href="#">Sustainability challenges in WASH Infrastructures in access to safe Drinking water and Sanitation</a>	Pakistan	Mohan Thakur - ACTED International
<a href="#">Inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRRM</a>	Nepal	Kabiram Bantha Mgar & Kanchha Man Lama Moktan - READ Nepal
<a href="#">Strengthening of community WASH facilities in flood prone areas in Nepal &amp; India</a>	Nepal & India (crossborder)	Bhawana Ghimire - RSDC & Nagendra K Singh –SSK
<a href="#">Climate Resilience Framework: BRAC 's Approach to Mainstream Climate Change</a>	India	Sumaiya Noor – BRAC
<a href="#">Water security and Resilience to Droughts for Dalits</a>	Thar desert region, western Rajasthan, India	Swapni Shah, UNNATI
<a href="#">Investing for Inclusive Impact</a>	India, Nepal, Bangladesh	Bhitush Luthra – Athena Infomatihcs
<a href="#">How to have Safe water in life of Dolpa</a>	Dolpa, Nepal	Prem Chand – PLAN Int.
<a href="#">Building community resilience through inclusive WASH: A case of WSS in Nepal</a>	Nepal	Binesh Roy – WaterAid
<a href="#">Peacebuilding through risk communication and community engagement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic</a>	Philippines	Robert de la Serna & Rey Anthony Anacleto - Peace Crops
<a href="#">Climate Change Induce change in flood pattern and its impact in WASH in North Bengal of Bangladesh</a>	Bangladesh	S.M. Tariquzzaman – Plan International
<a href="#">Mainstreaming the WASH issues in policies of government</a>	Nepal	Merina Maharjan & K.C. Subash – ENPHO & Giri Khatri - Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
<a href="#">Water Sustainability Initiative in Municipality (WSWiM)</a>	Timor-Leste	Aleixo A. Santos - Plan International

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