

WASH Response to COVID-19

May 1, 2020

OVERVIEW

World Vision launched its Global Health Emergency Response to COVID-19 on March 11, 2020, within hours of the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring a pandemic. World Vision rapidly began adapting its programming to respond in every country where it operates. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is a core component of World Vision's comprehensive, multisectoral response to this global health crisis, since clean water is essential to hygiene, and handwashing is critical to stopping the spread of the virus. As a global leader in the WASH sector, World Vision is helping keep children and families safe and healthy during this crisis.

World Vision has extensive experience responding to global health crises, including Ebola, Zika, and HIV and AIDS. As COVID-19 spreads across the globe, World Vision is uniting with governments, health agencies, and the general public to fight the pandemic. Countries vary widely in their capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks. The potential impact in fragile contexts is high, as the pandemic intensifies household vulnerabilities and weak health systems. Most countries are responding with social distancing measures and movement restrictions, causing economic and social impacts especially in low-income countries and among the poor. The challenge of delivering essential services during this rapidly changing global crisis requires flexibility and innovation at all levels. World Vision's response will remain dynamic to reflect the evolution of this global health crisis as it unfolds.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce its impact on vulnerable children and families

Objectives: WASH is critical to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in populations and healthcare facilities, and contributes to the following two objectives of World Vision's Global Response.



Objective 1: Scale up preventive measures to limit the spread of disease

Activities:

- Promoting innovative behavior-change messaging on handwashing, social distancing, and hygiene guidelines in coordination with ministries of health
- Conducting community awareness campaigns (via mass media, social media, faith leaders, door-to-door, etc.) on COVID-19 and risk reduction
- Constructing or rehabilitating community WASH facilities, including public hand-washing stations and solid waste management
- Disinfecting public areas (schools) and adding visual reminders to hand-washing facilities
- Providing vulnerable households, including caregivers, with cleaning and hygiene supplies, including soap, detergent, jerry cans, gloves, buckets, and brooms



Objective 2: Strengthen health systems and workers

Activities:

- Distributing disinfection kits, hygiene supplies, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to medical personnel
- Training health workers on infection prevention and control
- Providing healthcare facilities with water supply, hand-washing stations, and medical waste management



PROTECTING WORLD VISION STAFF

As it responds to this global health crisis, World Vision staff are following the most conservative standards between World Vision and government regulations to keep themselves protected.

World Vision preventive measures to keep staff safe:

- Limiting travel to communities and face-to-face meetings
- Using PPE and following recommended hygiene practices when travel is necessary
- Traveling with soap, water, and a towel, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer for handwashing
- When meetings are deemed lawful and necessary relative to the risk of exposure to COVID-19, limiting meetings to 10 people, in a protected outdoor space, for 30 minutes or less, and requiring handwashing with soap before and after meetings

BUILDING ON EXISTING WASH PROGRAMMING

During this global health crisis, World Vision's WASH Program is continuing its lifesaving operations with additional focus on supporting the fight against COVID-19. The program has an expansive geographic scale, operating in 55 countries across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the Middle East and Europe. World Vision's extensive hand-washing and hygiene promotion, which were standard interventions before this crisis, are even more critical now. Since faith leaders can have tremendous influence in communities, World Vision works with a global network of faith leaders to promote safe hygiene and is mobilizing this network to fight the virus.

In 2019 alone, World Vision reached 4.3 million people with hand-washing behavior-change education and facilitated building nearly half a million hand-washing facilities to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. A total of 6,307 faith leaders were trained to promote healthy hygiene and sanitation practices. WASH program beneficiary communities are now more prepared to protect themselves and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Since safe water for improved hygiene is considered an essential service, many governments in countries where lockdowns were ordered have given special permission to World Vision to continue drilling wells and constructing water points to support the fight against COVID-19. World Vision staff are taking all necessary precautions, including wearing protective gear, to prevent the spread of the virus as they conduct this life-sustaining work.

Additionally, World Vision's commitment to improve WASH services in health facilities is more important now than ever. Health centers are critical for reducing the impact of diseases such as COVID-19, but without basic hygiene, they can contribute to more infections and preventable deaths. Between 2016 and 2018, World Vision provided nearly 2,500 healthcare facilities with an improved water source and nearly 1,000 health centers with hand-washing facilities across 35 countries. In collaboration with partners, World Vision aims to reach everyone, everywhere it works with clean water, sanitation, and hygiene by 2030, at home, at school, and in health centers.

RAPIDLY RESPONDING TO COVID-19

World Vision is well positioned to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in lower- and middle-income countries because of its hygiene expertise, global scale, and trusted relationships with community leaders. World Vision's response is aligned with the United Nations plan to contain the spread of the pandemic. This includes following WHO technical guidance on infection prevention and control, as well as UNICEF guidelines to prevent COVID-19 by reducing exposure and transmission in vulnerable community settings, public spaces, homes, and communities. In each country context, World Vision is working closely with the government and Ministry of Health in its response.

Programming guidelines

World Vision's WASH programming guidelines for COVID-19 are focused on:

- Enabling community members to safely access WASH services without unnecessary risk of exposure, particularly through promotion of social distancing and decontamination of surfaces
- Supporting increased handwashing and hygiene to reduce the spread, for example by promotion of washing hands with soap when one enters the home in addition to other key times
- Reducing community gatherings for sharing information and instead reaching people through governmental and faith leaders using alternative channels like radio, TV, and social media
- Promoting isolation, household disinfection, and use of separate toilet facilities as well as providing hygiene kits for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases
- Promoting disease prevention work in healthcare facilities, including increased handwashing, use of PPE, heightened attention to cleaning, and adequate waste disposal practices for appropriate separation and treatment of larger quantities of potentially infectious waste

Accomplishment highlights

Objective 1: Scale up preventive measures to limit the spread of disease

World Vision is coordinating with formal and informal health services on risk communication and community engagement to reduce transmission and limit the spread of COVID-19. Below are some initial accomplishments during the first seven weeks of World Vision's response.



Objective 2: Strengthen health systems and workers

Infection prevention and control is always important in healthcare facilities, but especially so during a global pandemic. Because of the highly infectious nature of the virus, special precautions must be taken at healthcare facilities to ensure personal hygiene, clean surfaces, and appropriate waste management to prevent further spread of the virus. Below are some initial accomplishments to strengthen health systems during the first seven weeks of World Vision's response.

