



▶ Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) Guidance

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Technical note on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions in response to COVID-19

SUMMARY

The aim of this note is to identify EIIP initiatives in the WASH sector that also contribute to local job creation in response to COVID-19.

At our website (<http://ilo.org/eiip>) more information is available about EIIP, including guidelines for the preparation of EIIP COVID-19 response Concept Proposals, EIIP COVID-19 OSH guidelines and an EIIP strategy note in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) on 30 January 2020 declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and on 11 March it was declared a Pandemic. The speed and scale of the spread, the severity of cases, and the social and economic impact has been dramatic. According to the UN General Secretary¹: *We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations... It is a human crisis.* COVID-19 is attacking societies at their core, sinking the world economy into a recession with damaging consequences and unemployment levels that will go down in history. Governments are taking the necessary measures to contain the spread of the disease through lockdown measures, social distancing, teleworking, quarantine, and community mitigation strategies.

Health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the context of COVID 19

¹ UN, "Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19," March 2020. Accessible on: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf

Access to water and sanitation is a human right and clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals: “*Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*”. A WHO report² reveals the vast inequalities in the accessibility, availability and quality of water and sanitation services. Some 2.2 billion people around the world do not have safely managed drinking water, 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation, 3 billion people lack basic handwashing facilities at home, while 900 million school children, as well as one in six health care facilities, have no basic hygiene services. Many of these people lacking such basic services are in vulnerable situations: those with disabilities, the elderly, women and girls, displaced people, indigenous populations and those living in the hardest-to-reach rural areas.

Primary health care is another fundamental right and access to health centres and medical staff (including in-home caregivers) is a key principle in making primary health care work. Health policies should meet the immediate and basic health care needs of low-income and vulnerable groups. During COVID-19 primary health should promote the basic principles of sanitation and foster community awareness to prevent infection from, and control the spread of the disease.

Primary health care, safe water, sanitation and hygiene are key areas to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the WHO states that the provision of these is essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19 outbreak. COVID-19 has not yet been detected in drinking-water supplies, and based on current evidence, the risk is low. However, a number of actions can be taken to improve water safety, starting with protecting the water source, treating water at the point of distribution, collection, or consumption and ensuring that treated water is safely stored in homes in regularly cleaned and covered containers. It should also be noted that such investments to improve infrastructure and services in water and sanitation could potentially create jobs, both in the immediate and medium to long term.

Employment-intensive investment programme for, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

The ILO’s Employment-intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) has a significant portfolio of projects around the globe linking public investments, employment creation and poverty reduction through improving access to basic infrastructure, environmental and social services, particularly in rural areas. Its interventions cover various sectors, including rural roads, irrigation, building, water and soil conservation and **water and sanitation**. The EIIP promotes local resource based approaches and appropriate engineering and construction technologies that do not require highly specialized skills or equipment but favour solutions that rely on locally available resources, including unskilled and skilled labour. EIIP optimizes employment opportunities, while maintaining cost competitiveness and engineering quality standards.

² WHO, UNICEF, “Joint Monitoring Programme report, Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000-2017: special focus on inequalities,” 2019. Accessible on: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

There is a large potential for using the EIIP to improve water, sanitation and hygiene services, contributing thereby to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In coordination with donor agencies, health institutions and local governments, the EIIP, through its local resource-based approaches and community development approaches, can contribute to raising awareness and training of communities, workers and contractors to promote and improve basic WASH and primary health care services for preventing the spread of COVID-19. The EIIP can also contribute to improving, adapting or building basic infrastructure to improve water service provision and primary health care in the communities.

In order to respond at local level and with the support of the local government to provide safe access to clean water, health services and hygiene, the EIIP could assist the planning and design of such infrastructure or improve appropriate maintenance of such assets. These activities should go hand in hand with implementing awareness and community mobilization activities in health, hygiene and care services provision and training.

Key areas for EIIP interventions

Specific areas where EIIP could contribute through existing activities include:

1. Employing people to build, rehabilitate, improve or maintain physical infrastructure including access to water points, sanitation and handwashing facilities, health centres etc.
2. Raising awareness among EIIP workers and beneficiary communities about COVID-19 and its prevention. This could also include design and distribution of information, flyers and posters, social distance measures to points of water distribution and sanitation, and specific training courses to deliver in communities through social media networks or mobile applications, etc.
3. Organizing, training and employing people (community contractors/others) to provide services for communities, including safety, hygiene and health measures like disinfection of public areas (health centres, pharmacies, and markets), distribution of masks, care support services, etc.
4. Including in contracts and tender documents clauses for COVID-19 awareness and prevention activities (e.g. awareness campaigns, provision of hygiene/sanitation facilities, OSH, etc.) to ensure effective implementation of specific COVID-19 related labour practices. Include the relevant pay items in the (bills of quantity (BoQ)).

Table 1: Key areas for EIIP interventions in Health and WASH

Key area	General Recommendation	Possible EIIP intervention
Public health	Improve access to primary health care facilities	Build, improve, rehabilitate and maintain primary health care facilities including physical access to such facilities (local road networks, paths etc.) Employ people to provide care services at community level (e.g. through public employment programmes)

	Set up awareness and mobilization activities on measures needed to prevent infections – social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks, avoiding to touch ones face	<p>Disinfect high risk areas and conduct clean-up campaigns</p> <p>Establish strategies for COVID-19-related information and dissemination at local or project level in local language through multiple channels, including television, mobile phone networks, loudspeakers, posters, radio</p>
	Maintaining social distances of at least 1-2 metres in public spaces	Signalization of public access to keep the proposed social distance in queues when buying or selling products, ,at grocery stores, markets, fairs and for points of water distribution
Water	Safe access to water facilities or points of distribution in public institutions, refugee camps and markets	<p>Design, implementation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure, including ramps and access paths for people with disabilities, using LRB approaches</p> <p>Design and construction of alternative rain water collection systems for public schools, health centres, markets and other public buildings using local technologies and resources</p> <p>Construction of storage water tanks n (connected to zinc roof infrastructure)</p> <p>Construction of stone pavement or footpaths to and around water distribution points</p> <p>Establish water users groups</p> <p>Training on operation and maintenance of water provision systems</p>

Sanitation	<p>Providing water and sanitation services and promoting hygiene in the community should be designated as “essential services” and be allowed to continue during movement restrictions and for service providers have access to resources to protect their health (e.g. PPE and hand hygiene facilities)</p> <p>Toilet cleaning and maintenance. Monitor that toilets are kept clean and maintained, in a manner that does not deter use</p>	<p>Employ “essential services providers” at community level to include as key actors in OSH training and implementation (e.g. sanitation workers, plumbers, safe water and health promoters)</p> <p>Construction and maintenance of toilets</p> <p>Drainage cleaning</p> <p>Improved waste management systems</p>
	Sanitation and plumbing	Skills development to create employment opportunities, especially for women, for example in plumbing and sanitary system maintenance in homes and communities
Hygiene	<p>Introduce safe hygiene measures to protect from transmission of the virus from infected individuals and contaminated surfaces</p> <p>Hand-washing: Ensure that all public toilets, communal toilets, shared toilets and household toilets have h-washing facilities, with soap (or a clean rubbing agent and), and that arrangements are in place to ensure they remain functional</p>	<p>In collaboration with local community groups develop hygiene training and communications about how to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus</p> <p>Hire (young) people to raise improved hygiene awareness at community level</p> <p>Hire (young) people for distributing sanitizers and soap</p>

The proposed interventions are equally important to prevent other diseases that under the current situation could increase from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural areas often lack sufficient facilities and services. Water and sanitary provisions are often equally inadequate in poor and highly populated urban neighbourhoods, slums and refugee settlements. Employment opportunities are frequently lacking in these areas and employment-intensive investment strategies that promote the engagement of local labour in building and improving infrastructure in support of WASH, health and waste

management contribute to both improved living and health conditions and income-earning opportunities.

Some guiding principles for EIIP design and implementation

In designing and implementing EIIPs, particular attention needs to be given to the following principles:

- **Target vulnerable groups and women:** employment-intensive investment approaches pay particular attention to vulnerable groups and gender equality. EIIP interventions can provide valuable income-generating and employment opportunities for women. This is often a first-time opportunity for women to have paid work outside of the home and thereby contributing to both the economic and social empowerment of women. EIIP interventions can pay special attention to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality in the short and medium term through two main strategies for ensuring that EIIP's WASH and health initiatives work for both women and men³:
- **Improving WASH and health infrastructure that meets both women and men's needs:** paying special attention to benefits for both male and female workers during project design and implementation. There will be a need to build and improve local WASH and health infrastructure to improve and facilitate mobility and accessibility to public services (water, sanitation, primary health care). In the medium and long term, the outputs of the infrastructure works can be of critical importance for women's livelihoods, for example, for diversifying their economic activities as providers of services for operation and maintenance of infrastructure, paid care services, personal health kits and hand washing amenities.
- **Make work sites gender responsive:** through information and sensitization, removal of restrictions, setting targets or quota, training and contracting modalities. Women could for example be involved in providing water and sanitation services and hand hygiene in their community or on project sites. Specific modules on WASH services could be included as part of a training package to improve women's skills and employability. Those already trained in plumbing, masonry and maintenance of water provision systems could become "essential service providers" at community level. To ensure that women and men are paid equally, attention needs to be paid to the valuation of women's work and to ensure that when tasks are different, women's tasks are not undervalued and underpaid.
- **Promote the use of local resources and community contracting:** remote rural communities often experience poor access to primary healthcare, lack of access to other essential services, including safe drinking water and sanitation. Rural communities may seek their own solutions to this pandemic through applying traditional knowledge and practices such as voluntary isolation, sometimes sealing off their territories, as well as other preventive measures to avoid

³ ILO, "Building a gender-equitable future through Employment Intensive Investment Programmes," Policy Brief, 2019. Accessible on: https://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/policy-briefs/WCMS_675166/lang-en/index.htm

infections. The most recent EIIP experience in developing water and sanitation infrastructure in remote communities through community participation and contracting using local resources is the construction of two dams and the installation of water tanks for a gravity-fed water supply project in Papua New Guinea⁴.

- **Exit strategy:** ensure that a clear exit strategy exists from the start. It should consider the operation, maintenance, transition and eventual decommissioning of water and toilet infrastructures. Where appropriate, WASH facilities should be handed over to the communities or relevant authorities.

Safety and health considerations

The spread of COVID-19 varies greatly from one country to another. Therefore, whether employment-intensive works can continue or not will depend on the level of risks in the area as well as the government policy measures to restrict movement of people and socio-economic activities. The decision on the implementation of WASH and health interventions will have to be made on a case-by-case basis.

In all situations however, during and after the pandemic it is important to provide safe working facilities and arrangements. To overcome specific COVID-19 related safety and health challenges, the EIIP has developed a guidance on adjusting labour practices and preventive and mitigation measures to be taken with regard employment-intensive works during the current crisis⁵.

List of useful resources

ILO, "COVID-19 - Job creation through employment intensive public works programmes," 2020. Accessible on:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_743537.pdf

ILO, "Community Infrastructure in Urban Areas – Creating Jobs while Improving Low-income Settlements - ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific", 2012

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/WCMS_740262/lang--en/index.htm

ILO, "Guides for Integrated Rural Access Planning and Community Contracting in the Water and Sanitation sector," 2017.

- **Guide No. 1:** Conceptual Guide for an Integrated Rural Access Planning and Community Contracting in the Water and Sanitation Sector.
- **Guide No. 2:** Development of integrated rural access planning processes in the water and sanitation sector.
- **Guide No. 3:** Community contracting to execute public works and manage services.

⁴ ILO, "Papua New Guinea project brief: Employment-intensive recovery and reconstruction response (E3R) 2019," 2020. Accessible on: http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/WCMS_743635/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ ILO, "COVID-19 - Job creation through employment intensive public works programmes," 2020. Accessible on: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_743537.pdf

Accessible on:

http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/publications/WCMS_544488/lang--en/index.htm

ILO, "Local Resource-Based Approaches in Water Works," 2019. Accessible on:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/---invest/documents/publication/wcms_719955.pdf

ILO, "Earthquake victims get gravity-fed water supply in Papua New Guinea," Video, 2020. Accessible on:

https://www.ilo.org/suva/public-information/videos/WCMS_732398/lang--en/index.htm

ILO, "Rapid Employment Creation in Times of Crisis – ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific," 2013. Accessible on: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/---invest/documents/publication/wcms_740260.pdf

ILO, "Wastewater and jobs: The Decent Work approach to reducing untreated wastewater," Working Paper, 2017. Accessible on:

http://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS_548129/lang--en/index.htm

ILO, "Papua New Guinea project brief: Employment-intensive recovery and reconstruction response (E3R) 2019," 2020. Accessible on:

http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/WCMS_743635/lang--en/index.htm

Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), "The water report 2016," SIWI Report No. 37, 2016. Accessible on: <http://www.siwi.org/publications/the-water-report/>

WHO, UNICEF, "Joint Monitoring Programme report, Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000-2017: special focus on inequalities," 2019. Accessible on:

https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/