



## FACT SHEET

# CEA AND WASH

Community engagement and accountability (CEA) is a way of working collaboratively with communities that recognises and values all community members as equal partners, whose diverse needs, priorities, and preferences guide everything we do. We achieve this by integrating meaningful community participation, open and honest communication, and mechanisms to listen to and act on feedback, within our programmes and operations.

**Community engagement and being accountable to communities is not something new or separate from WASH programming.**

Participatory approaches and community engagement have been a large and fundamental part of WASH programmes for many years. We know that when everyone in a community – regardless of their gender, age, disability or background – has their voice heard and is actively involved in designing and guiding WASH improvements in their community, the impact on health, dignity and resilience are greater.

For example, community engagement approaches that are commonly used in WASH programmes include:

- Asking and listening to people's preferences and requirements on the design and location of WASH facilities, with hygiene promoters then communicating this to the technical team.
- Discussing water, sanitation and hygiene related topics with people, through a number of approaches and channels including face-to-face, participatory activities and mass media, e.g., radio.
- Analysing the communities' practices and socio-cultural context related to WASH, household and community decision-making structures and power, trusted communication channels, and so on, to enable effective social and behaviour change approaches.
- Working with communities to identify and support them to implement local, practical solutions to improve WASH infrastructure and behaviours.
- Collecting feedback from men, women, boys, girls, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups on WASH facility operation and maintenance, distributed materials, hygiene promotion activities, challenges, satisfaction etc. to guide improvements to the programme.

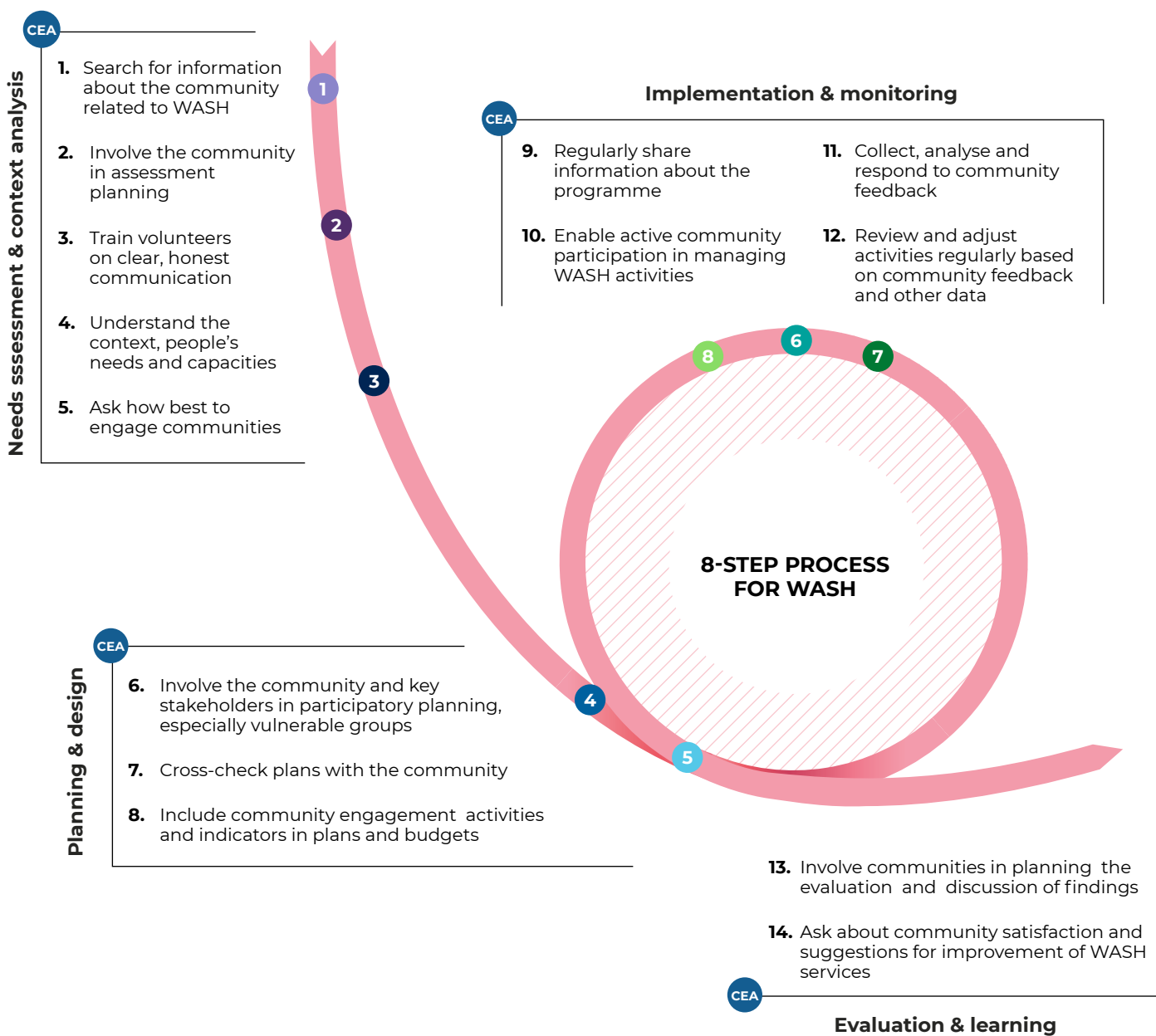
There are 14 key actions for achieving good community engagement over the 8-step process for WASH [see diagram below].

**Most National Societies already implement many of these actions within their WASH programmes. Although WASH has been doing community engagement for a long time, there is always room for improvement.**

**By taking a more systematic approach to community engagement – working in a transparent, inclusive and participatory way across the 8 steps – we can improve the quality, impact and sustainability of our WASH programmes.**

These key actions can be used as a good reminder or to ‘cross-check’ what is already included in the WASH programme, and to identify any gaps or areas where community engagement could be strengthened. Use the scorecard on page 5 to help. For more detailed information on what each of the 14 key actions for CEA include see IFRCs [CEA guide and tools](#) (2021 revised version).

## 14 key actions for achieving good community engagement in WASH



### Engaging communities during emergencies

When the situation is urgent and complex, we might not be able to implement all 14 actions included in this graphic. For more information on how to ensure a minimum level of community engagement in WASH during emergencies, look at the ten actions to engage communities during emergency response actions (page 74-75 of Module 5 in the [CEA Guide](#)), and the CEA checklist for WASH in emergencies ([Tool 24](#)).



## HOW DO CEA AND WASH FIT TOGETHER?

WASH programming should always aim to include and be guided by the 14 key actions for good community engagement and accountability. It is important to keep in mind that ‘community engagement’ and ‘hygiene promotion’ often mean the same thing in practice: if you are doing good HP then you are doing good community engagement (they are not something separate).

The IFRC has invested into building a network of CEA practitioners supporting programmes to be delivered in a participatory and accountable way. At country level, there will often be a CEA staff member or focal point within National Societies and may be a CEA delegate deployed as part of operations. There may be activities planned and budgeted for by the CEA focal point or team that **need to be aligned and coordinated with HP activities, to avoid duplication, confusion of the community, loss of trust and ineffective programming.**

For a WASH programme, there are a number of areas where working together can add value, including:

- Use the CEA focal point (NS staff, or IFRC delegate) as a **resource or partner for brainstorming and ideas** to strengthen community engagement throughout WASH programme – especially around understanding contexts, participation approaches, feedback systems, and communicating about who we are/what we do.
- Rather than having separate HP and CEA trainings for community volunteers, **involve the CEA focal point when planning hygiene promotion trainings and include sessions on participation, communication and accountability.**
- Work with the CEA focal point to understand how **WASH feedback fits into the broader programme (or National Society) feedback system.** The CEA focal point ensures that feedback is collected, shared and responded to in a systematic, coherent way across all sectors. Remember to document any feedback collected as part of the WASH programme, and how it was used for planning, design and adapting implementation and behaviour change strategies..
- As early in the programme/operation as possible, ask the CEA focal point if they have **existing data collection tools for for understanding people perceptions, practices and accountability aspects. It is important to harmonise these tools** as much as possible to **ensure that all feedback collected as part of routine HP monitoring activities is captured, compatible** with other sectors **and useful.**
- Work with the CEA focal point **to understand how (and to who) non-WASH related feedback, questions and concerns should be referred to** (for example, when hygiene promoters are out in the community, and someone tells them a complaint about shelter or asks a question about livelihoods).
- Ask the CEA focal point to share **standard operation/programme information including RCRC introductions to community members** (e.g., who we are, what we do, what can you expect, where to provide feedback or complain). The CEA focal point works to ensure that we are ‘speaking with the same voice and listening with the same ears’.
- Very often in operations and programmes, risk communication activities are conducted by WASH, health and CEA teams – therefore it is vital to **collaborate and work together on risk communication, including risk perception, tracking of misinformation and training.**



## DO'S AND DONT'S FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Do not put too much focus** on one-way messages as a way to change behaviours.
- **Do ensure** that information, education and communication (IEC) materials and key messages are developed by relevant WASH experts, with support or advice from CEA.
- **Do ensure community feedback is not** only used to change what we say (messages), but also what we do (changing programming activities).
- **Do document the feedback** received from communities and how it was used for planning, design and implementation.
- **Do coordinate** community engagement, social mobilization, health promotion, hygiene promotion and risk communication activities. Not coordinating well can lead to duplication, wasted resources, confusion in communities and also confusion amongst volunteers, as it is often the same volunteers who are asked to do all these activities.
- **Do define roles and responsibilities. Being clear on who should lead** on what activities in a programme or response can be achieved by good coordination across sectors and teams and the development of shared work plans.
- **Do not reinvent the wheel** when there is a wealth of excellent resources already available. This is a waste of valuable time and resources.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?



[Ask the CEA focal point at at operation, country or regional level](#)

[IFRC CEA guide and tools \(2021 revised version\)](#) including the [Feedback Starter Kit](#) (step-by-step guidance and templates to plan, choose, set up and manage a feedback and complaints system)

[IFRC guide and tools: 8 steps for hygiene promotion in emergencies](#) and other resources on community engagement and accountability in WASH on [IFRCs WASH website](#)

[IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion \(PGI\) in WASH guidance note \(2021\)](#) and the tool 'Questions to guide WASH programming: Integrating PGI and good community engagement' ([Questions to guide WASH programming](#))

