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## FAITS & CHIFFRES

**More than 2 billion** people live without access to safe water at home.

Every day, **more than 700** children under five years of age die from diarrhoea due to unsafe water or poor sanitation.

**Around 4 billion** people are hit by severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year.

(source: [United Nations](#))

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## Protection Civile et Operations d'Aide Humanitaire Européennes

# Water, sanitation and hygiene

## Qu'Est-ce que c'est?

Water, sanitation and hygiene (also known as WASH) are closely connected sectors and essential for good public health. In emergency and crisis situations, providing access to clean water in sufficient quantities is paramount. Basic sanitation and hygiene education are important for a healthy living environment.

## Pourquoi est-ce important?

Every year, 30 million people flee their homes as a result of conflict or natural disasters, while over 200 million are affected by natural hazards. Very often, in such emergencies, the displaced people lack access to sufficient and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) because water supply and sanitation systems are damaged, destroyed or inexistent. Due to climate change and urbanisation, the number of people without access to safe water is expected to double by 2025, reaching 2 billion people.

Lack of access to clean water and to basic sanitation, and low hygiene standards increase the vulnerability of people to epidemic outbreaks. Every day, over 700 children under five years of age die from diarrhoea brought about by unsafe water or poor sanitation (source: [UN](#)). WASH, therefore, represents one of the main sectors of humanitarian operations.

## En quoi consiste notre aide ?

The EU is one of the largest humanitarian donors of WASH assistance worldwide. It contributes around EUR 200 million each year to ensure timely and dignified access to sufficient and safe water services for populations threatened by humanitarian crises.

The EU increasingly supports projects that incorporate WASH components within other humanitarian areas of operation, such as health. It also places special emphasis on enabling people in a crisis situation to have quick access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, helping to build their [resilience](#) against crises and taking preventive action against water-borne diseases. Whenever possible, sanitation and hygiene promotion activities are integrated into water supply interventions in order to reduce the risk of water contamination and water-borne diseases. This approach also ensures that projects are community-led and promote self-sufficiency as part of exit strategies.

The EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) draws its expertise in this humanitarian area from a network of regional and global WASH and shelter and settlement experts, its country experts as well as its non-governmental organisations (NGO), UN, and Red Cross partners.

The EU prioritises three areas in the field of WASH:

- Speed of response: the increasing frequency and scale of sudden onset disasters require better reaction capacities that get experts and equipment on site as early as possible. The EU facilitates this through improving logistical support for the humanitarian community.
- Coordination: a fast response also depends on good coordination, essential for assessing and prioritising needs. The EU provides support to the [Global WASH Cluster](#) - the main international forum, led by [UNICEF](#), for coordinating humanitarian operations in water, sanitation and hygiene assistance.
- Working with civil protection actors: the complementary roles of humanitarian aid and civil protection are highly important in the WASH sector. For example, growing urban humanitarian WASH needs often require a technically adapted response. This can be provided through civil protection, for example, by setting-up large scale water pumps and purification systems to replace water infrastructure damaged in a natural disaster.

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