

ACF intervention policy and strategy

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1 Global water and sanitation problem

Access to water and sanitation is one of the major challenges for the 21st century. According to WHO (2004), 1.1 billion people across the world do not have access to safe water and 2.4 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities (see Box 1.1). As a consequence every year around 4 million people, the majority of who are children, die from water and sanitation related diseases.

Water is not only important for public health, but also for general livelihoods: crop production (70 to 80% of all water used is for crop production), livestock production, industry, commerce and daily life depend on access to water. Water-supply conditions therefore affect health, hunger, poverty and community development.

This disastrous access to water and sanitation is due partly to a lack of infrastructure but also to poor management that creates waste, contamination and degradation of the environment. Water shortages may lead to tensions between individuals, communities or countries, which can evolve into conflicts. At the same time, the demand for water is increasing due to population growth, urbanisation (rural exodus) and industrialisation. Urbanisation has also created extremely poor sanitary conditions.

Most of these problems can be solved through comprehensive management of water resources and demand. Water is a finite resource that must be managed with a global vision that works at three levels: *international* to define rules to protect water resources and to avoid international conflicts; *national* to apply defined rules and to define national water-access policies; and *local* to develop local initiatives to ensure communities' water access. Box 1.2 introduces the main commitments of the international community regarding this issue.

Box 1.1

Water & sanitation in the world (mainly from World Water Assessment, WHO & UNICEF, 2003).

Limited access

- 1 100 million people do not have access to safe water (drinking water).
- 2 400 million people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities (half of the world's population), the majority of who are in rural areas (80%).

Consequences

- 80% of disease in developing countries is related to water.
- 4 million people, the majority of who are children, die each year (more than 10 000 each day) due to diseases related to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Aggravating factors

- By the year 2025, water needs will be increased by 20% (mainly due to population growth, urbanisation & industrialisation).
- The reduction of water resources due to waste, erosion, desertification (global warming), overexploitation and contamination.
- The uneven distribution of water resources that leads to tensions between communities and countries for its control.

Conflicts, natural disasters, discrimination and marginalisation, *destruction** of the state and communities, and extreme poverty exacerbate sanitary problems and may lead to humanitarian crises.

The first objective of humanitarian assistance programmes is to protect and improve the lives of the people in these critical situations. In principle, the first interventions of a water and sanitation programme focus on coverage of the most basic and immediate needs, while at the same time seeking to reinforce and stabilise the foundations for development in the community, in a way that will reduce or eliminate the risks linked to these vulnerable situations. In addition, water programmes also try to work to establish peace and equity: community mobilisation through water supply and sanitation projects can be a means of creating social cohesion and removing tension.

2 Crises and humanitarian contexts

2.1 Typology of humanitarian contexts

Millions of people in the world find themselves in situations of crisis (displaced populations, marginalized populations, victims of conflict etc.), see Box 1.3. As a consequence, entire communities live in a state of extreme vulnerability and their survival is constantly threatened. Humanitarian programmes are implemented in situations where human dignity is not respected and where basic needs are not met.

Action Contre la Faim distinguishes five types of problem that may classically lead to humanitarian situations and that warrant intervention:

Open conflicts

This refers to any conflict (civil war, armed conflict between countries etc.) which has a strong impact on the way of life of populations and which jeopardizes their survival. The main consequences of such conflicts are:

- physical insecurity and persecution;
- the disintegration of state structures and services (electricity, sanitary infrastructure, hospitals etc.);

* The word *destruction*, applied to social organisations (States, communities, etc.), means the loss of structure and social cohesion and therefore results in changes in function, relationships and capacities.

Box 1.2

International commitments regarding water and sanitation issues.

Over the last thirty years the United Nations has been especially conscious of the significant role that water and sanitation play in human development and it has set out to define some general plans for development:

In the conference of Mar de Plata in 1977, the United Nations declared the eighties as the International Decade of Water and Sanitation, with a clear objective: 100% world-wide coverage of safe water and sanitation.

In 1992, the Statute of Dublin defined 4 fundamental principles:

- Fresh water is a vulnerable and finite resource, which is essential for life, development and the environment.
- Development and management of water should have a participative focus, involving the users, and those responsible at all levels, in the management plans and the politics of water.
- Women play a fundamental role in the provision, management and safekeeping of water.
- Water has an economic value in every aspect and has to be recognised as an economic good.

In the Forum of The Hague in 2000, an attempt was made to establish an international policy for water under the name of World Vision of Water. This policy developed three sectors: water for people, water for food and water for nature. The principal theme, which the document develops, is the integrated management of resources. One of its most important premises is that communities decide their own level of access to safe water and the hygienic conditions for healthy living, as well as the economic activities for which they use the water, and that they organise themselves to accomplish them. The most controversial recommendation is that a price must be placed on the total cost of water services (and it recommended doing so through the users).

In 2001, Koffi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, recognised that access to water is a fundamental human need, and as such, a basic human right. Water is necessary for human dignity.

The Kyoto Forum in 2003 focused on solutions and perspectives for the future, and the two main debates were private versus public management, and the accomplishment of the Objectives of the Millennium, which aim is to halve the number of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015.

Some NGOs have criticised the World Water Forums' initiatives because of their technocracy, lack of transparency, and scant acknowledgment of the understanding and experience of local people (though in Kyoto, there was good participation from local organisations), and mainly because they support the World Bank strategy on the privatisation of water, itself criticised for its very commercial vision, that gives little importance to development concerns and the situation of vulnerable communities.

The Sphere Project was launched in 1997, and reviewed in 2004, by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, who framed a Humanitarian Charter and identified Minimum Standards to be attained in disaster assistance. The Charter describes the core principles that govern humanitarian action and reasserts the right of populations affected by disaster, whether natural or man-made (including armed conflict), to protection and assistance. It also reasserts the right of disaster-affected populations to life with dignity.

The 'Academie de l'eau' (a French NGO) also created the '*Charte Sociale de l'eau*' (the 'Social Charter for Water'), in which they summarise tools and concrete actions arising from the diverse experience of community management of water.

- the sudden loss of means of subsistence/livelihoods (commercial exchanges, market access, agricultural activities etc.);
- the weakening of internal mechanisms of regulation;
- the displacement of populations inside and/or outside of the country.

Natural disasters

This refers to the occurrence of any natural phenomenon which jeopardises the lives of populations. These phenomena can be sudden (e.g. earthquake or flood) or gradual (e.g. drought). Some disasters are foreseeable (e.g. hurricanes), others are completely unpredictable (e.g. earthquakes).

Box 1.3

Global picture of affected people.

- There are more than 12 million refugees in the world (ACNUR, 2002).
- There are more than 5 million internally displaced people in the world (ACNUR 2002).
- Approximately 608 million people were affected by disasters in the year 2002 (IFRC 2003).
- 842 million people (almost 800 million in developing countries), or 15% of the world's population, are undernourished, consuming less than 2 000 kilocalories per day (FAO 2003).

Consequences are:

- the sudden loss of means of subsistence/livelihoods (commercial exchanges, market access, agricultural activities, sanitary infrastructure etc.);
- the weakening of internal mechanisms of regulation;
- the displacement of populations inside and/or outside of the country.

Post-crisis

This refers to the time period following a serious crisis, be it man-made or natural. The populations affected are no longer subject to the immediate threats of the crisis, but must now deal with the resulting consequences and challenges: returning home after having been displaced, recovering lost goods and means of production etc. The powers in place are often unable (or unwilling) to help people recover their self-reliance, and must face their own problems of restructuring.

Destructuration

A country is in a state of destructuration when there is no officially recognized government, or when the government does not meet its responsibilities towards the population. This can be due to a lack of capacity (financial, structural, legitimacy issues etc.) within the state apparatus, or because of specific political actors who are either too uninterested or too self-seeking to bring the state's capacity to bear. At the same time, the international community doesn't recognise the absence of a state and act accordingly. As a consequence, people are left to themselves. When such is the case, violence usually becomes widespread and social services (construction, maintenance, management of sanitary infrastructure etc.) are at a minimum. In many cases state disintegration leads to community disintegration that prevents people from coping with their traditional means.

Discrimination

This refers to a country where communities or sections of the population suffer from discrimination along social, cultural, ethnic, religious or racial lines. This discrimination can be the result of policies (active or passive) implemented by a government (usually a strong state) but also by communities or groups themselves. The consequences for people discriminated against can be many:

- physical and moral persecution (e.g. forced displacement);
- blockage of internal mechanisms of regulation;
- exclusion from all types of development policy.

2.2 Humanitarian situations and their evolution

Not all the situations described above lead to humanitarian crises, and the consequences of a disaster or of a context favourable to crisis depend on the type and level of vulnerability of the affected populations (see Figure 1.3). These conditions determine the severity and impact of each event. For example, hurricanes of the same intensity will cause much greater loss and more damage in Central America than in Florida, principally due to the weakness of preparedness policies and local capacities in Central American countries. In another example, the year following the Iraqi war in 2003 did not lead

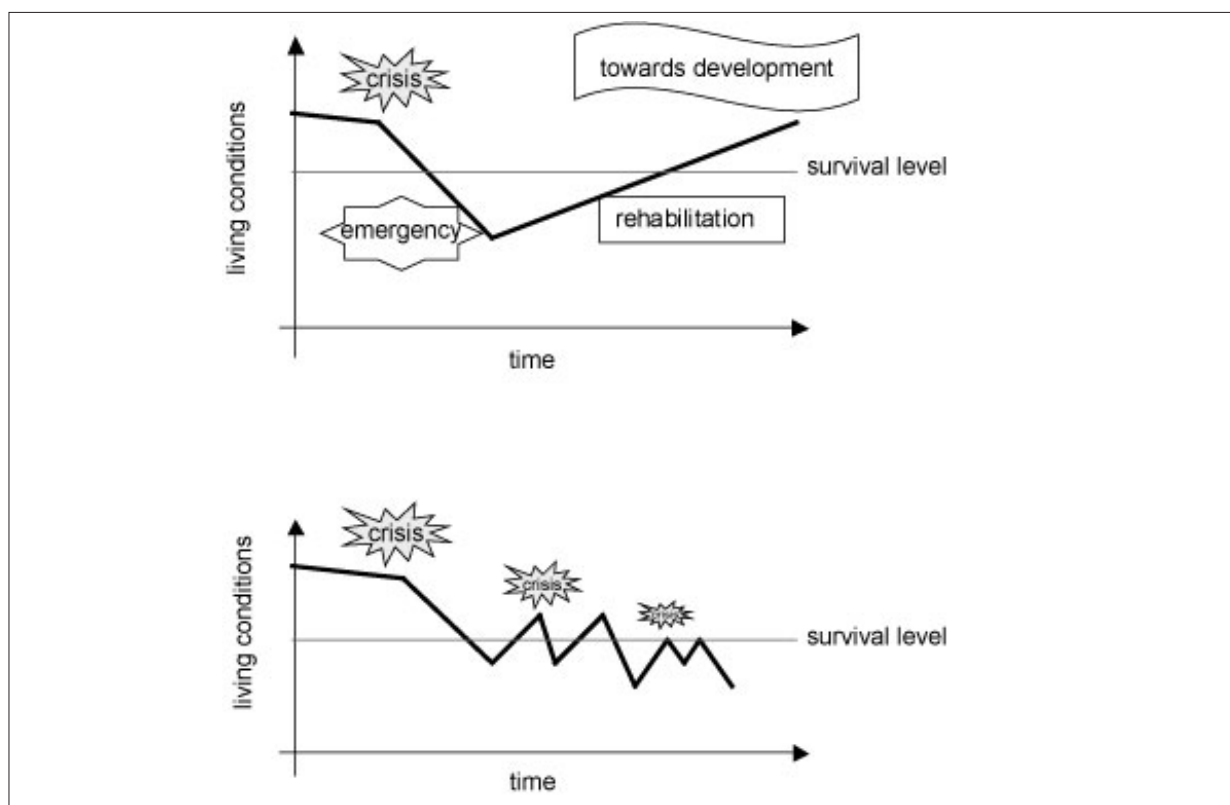


Figure 1.1 Evolution of humanitarian situations.
A: continuum model. B: contiguuum model.

to an acute humanitarian crisis as previously feared. The level of development and internal structure of the country before the conflict allowed it to deal with the losses of the state and with local conflicts.

Analysis of the situation allows consideration of threats and vulnerabilities that may lead to a crisis and therefore decision on, and design of, an intervention. Section 4 and Chapter 2 develop the determination of criteria for intervention.

Crisis situations are usually complex and characterised by the interaction of various factors: natural catastrophes and/or human conflicts are added to various socio-economic and structural problems. The resulting compounded effects are often of the greatest magnitude. A crisis can initially arise from a sudden (quick-onset) occurrence (e.g. war, flooding) or via a slow and gradual (slow-onset) process (e.g. economic disruption or drought). Following its original manifestation, a crisis can then further evolve according to two possible models as explained below.

If a crisis consists of a single event, once that event is over and the more urgent needs are covered, one can move on directly from an emergency phase to a recovery phase. In such a case, the aim is to return to a state of normality similar to that prior to the crisis. This is called the *continuum model* (Figure 1.1A), and it has traditionally been used in the humanitarian community to describe the linear evolution of a crisis and response mechanisms corresponding to each phase: emergency, rehabilitation and development once the situation has recovered. These phases are reflected in the strategies and policies of many humanitarian organisations (donors and NGOs).

However, the reality is much more complex. Crises do not follow single evolutionary lines; the causes and aggravating factors are diverse, and situations may follow a succession of emergency phases and recovery phases, leading to cyclical crises. Populations must then face increasing levels of insecurity and socio-economic hardship. On the other hand, the situation prior to the event is not always a good model for recovery and it may be necessary to set other goals.

In recognition of this complex reality, the *contiguuum model* was later developed (Figure 1.1B). This model incorporates the idea that in the same context, different levels in the response can coexist (the population is not affected uniformly by the crisis), and it emphasises the idea that in the majority of cases, the evolution of a situation is not linear (special attention needs to be paid to cyclical crises). This puts the concept of an 'emergency' in a much wider framework that recognises importance of the lack of organisational capacity, and reinforces the approach of disaster preparedness and risk management.

2.3 Mechanisms of response

The mechanisms of response are various and the strategy of any intervention includes several different kinds of response. Nevertheless, these responses can be classified as follows:

Emergency responses

The main objective is to guarantee the *survival* of people facing a crisis, meeting basic needs (i.e. the most urgent). The response must be swift and effective, focusing on short-term vulnerability reduction. Typically, following an emergency response, the general situation will still be fragile, and a strong dependency on outside help will exist. Emergency responses are mainly appropriate in cases of open conflicts and natural disasters.

Capacity-building and rehabilitation responses

The main objective is to help provide or restore people's livelihood and reduce dependence on external aid. Such interventions focus on the rehabilitation of social structures as well as the rehabilitation of infrastructure. In many cases, simply repairing material and social damage is not sufficient, as conditions prior to the disaster were not adequate. The response mechanisms need to be adapted to more self-reliant models and focus their objectives on the improvement of basic living conditions and the reduction of the major vulnerabilities faced in the medium term. This is achieved by providing a complete coverage of needs via self-reliant systems and so implies the participation and the empowerment of local structures and communities, as well as national institutions, in order to guarantee sustainability. They are appropriate where the situation is still fragile but where there is not as great a threat to life as in post-crisis, destructuration or discrimination situations.

Long-term interventions

These focus on structural problems, and the principal objective is the reinforcement of the existing local capacity, with the goal of improving the living conditions of the communities in a sustainable way, and respect for their rights. The participation of the communities concerned, in the definition and implementation of programmes, is central to this approach. These programmes focus on the reduction of vulnerability in the long term. External support is kept to a minimum, and implementation is mainly done through local partners. These responses are appropriate in cases of post-crisis, destructuration and discrimination.

Disaster-preparedness and risk-management programmes

These seek to reduce the impact of disasters through reducing communities' vulnerabilities and reinforcing their capacity for response. It includes:

- *Prevention*: measures and actions to avoid or remove risk (e.g. soil conservation, dam construction and earthquake-proof constructions).
- *Mitigation*: measures and actions to reduce or decrease risk; increasing the capacities of communities and decreasing their vulnerabilities (e.g.: institutional capacity-building, disaster education and awareness raising, legislation and planning etc.).
- *Preparedness*: measures for planning, organising and facilitating warning systems, search and rescue, emergency response and rehabilitation in case of disaster; strengthening the capacity of local actors to respond to disasters (e.g. community contingency plans).

Disaster preparedness is appropriate when vulnerability is high and a strong likelihood of disaster exists. It can form part of emergency, rehabilitation and development interventions, but has a long term approach.

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Threat} + \text{vulnerability}}{\text{Response capacity}}$$

Note. – In principal, the affected population should always be closely involved in the assistance activities. However, even in some long-term projects, direct implementation with little or no involvement of the affected population may be required for technical or contextual reasons.

2.4 Technical intervention and advocacy

Hunger, and humanitarian crises, may have a variety of causes: political, economic and natural, as presented in Section 2.1. Most of the humanitarian crises of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have had a political component resulting from a failure within the political system, just as they may have stemmed from a lack of concern by key actors, or by a blatant disregard for human rights.

As a consequence, effective humanitarian response often implies intervening both through technical interventions in the field (including infrastructure building, education and community strengthening, and institutional support such as involvement in national water policy development, as Action Contre la Faim did in East Timor etc.), to meet needs created by the crises (see Section 3.2), but also through advocacy in order to fight against the political causes of the humanitarian situation.

Advocacy aims to act on the underlying causes (often political and economic) of a crisis by bearing witness and highlighting a state of affairs that is unacceptable in humanitarian terms, with the objective of creating a level of public awareness and reaction that leads to pressure on policy makers to improve the situation. Examples of activities carried out include the collection of information (identification underlying political and economical causes), awareness campaigns, victim-protection programmes, institutional lobbying, and defence of human rights, including access to water (see Section 3.2).

3 Water and sanitation programmes

Action contre la Faim's main objective is to *fight hunger* and assist *populations faced with life-threatening situations*.

Water is essential for life and is very often a priority for threatened communities; in addition, water and sanitation factors are part of the underlying causes of malnutrition as presented in the Figure 1.2.

3.1 Programme objectives

The global objective of water and sanitation programmes is to *guarantee access to water and sanitation that is essential to survival and socio-economic development*. In many programmes the main concerns are sanitary risks and in these cases the objective is specifically focused on *the reduction of diseases related to water and poor sanitary conditions*.

This global objective can involve three aspects:

1) *Covering the minimum requirements necessary for life*

When a serious threat to human life exists it is necessary to meet the minimum needs for survival, i.e. a *minimum access to water and vital sanitation structures*.

In each situation it is necessary to carry out a specific analysis to decide which minimum standards and reference indicators will be used. The Sphere project established a set of key indicators as a guideline, serving as reference in emergency situation (see Box 1.4 and Chapter 2). Action Contre la Faim was involved in writing the first two versions of the Sphere handbook.

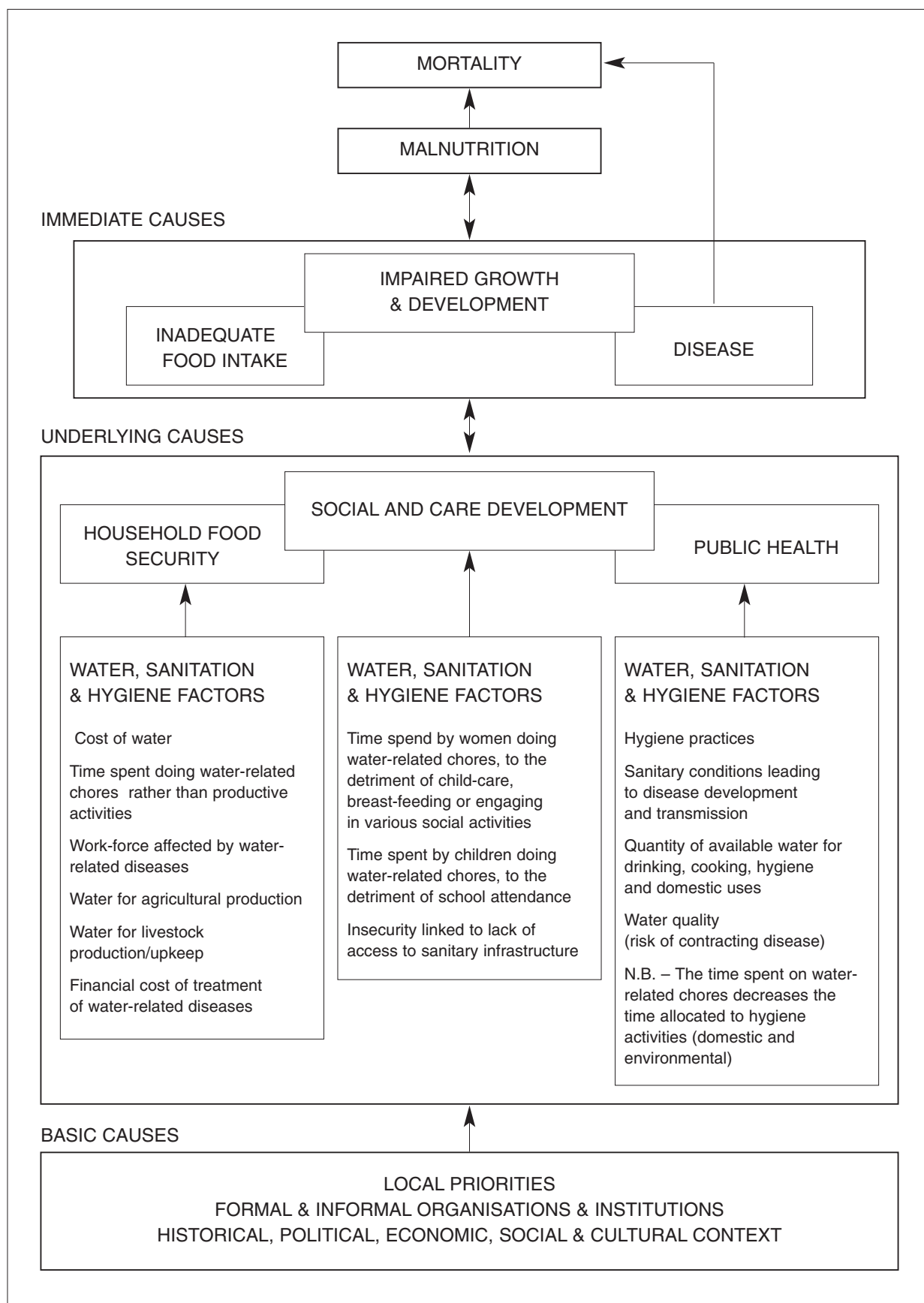


Figure 1.2: Integrated Framework showing the contribution of water and sanitation factors to the underlying causes of mortality and malnutrition (adapted from UNICEF, 1990).

Box 1.4

The Sphere project.

The Sphere project is a global and interactive definition of standards designed for use in *disaster response*, and may also be useful in disaster preparedness and humanitarian advocacy. It is applicable in a range of situations where relief is required, including natural disasters as well as armed conflict.

It is designed to be used in both slow- and rapid-onset situations, in both rural and urban environments, in developing and developed countries, anywhere in the world. The emphasis throughout is on meeting the *urgent survival needs* of people affected by disaster, while asserting their basic human right to life with dignity.

Sphere handbooks includes specific points to consider when applying the standards and indicators in different situations, guidance on tackling practical difficulties, and advice on priority issues. They may also include critical issues relating to the standard or indicators, and describe dilemmas, controversies or gaps in current knowledge. See Chapter 2, Section 1.2 for more details.

2) *Reducing the risk of the spread of water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases*

In developing countries, 80% of disease is related to water and approximately 2 billion people die each year because of diarrhoeal water and sanitation-related diseases (WHO 2003). For Action Contre la Faim, water has to be considered in a broad public health sense, to include general sanitary conditions and hygiene practices, mainly responsible for water contamination (faecal contamination) and pathogen development (e.g. malaria), see Figure 1.2.

The main water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases are presented in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

Action Contre la Faim's water programmes normally integrate water supply, sanitation, local capacity building, and hygiene and environmental promotion.

3) *Guaranteeing access to water as a necessary resource for food security and socio-economic development*

The means of survival and development for many communities are tightly linked to the availability of water resources (see Figure 1.2, impacts on household food security).

This dependence on water is particularly true for many rural communities who rely on agriculture and livestock production. For those communities these production activities depend mainly on suitable access to water through irrigation systems or livestock water points. In arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) regions, where livelihoods are chronically affected by droughts that cause disruption of the economic system, the construction of appropriate water systems and the training of communities in water-resource management can significantly decrease the vulnerability of rural populations to water shortages.

Lack of access to water also has a strong impact on the household economy, as the cost of water is an important part of many families' budgets (particularly in urban and peri-urban areas). For example, in Haiti, after the floods of December 2003 that destroyed the water-supply network of Port de Paix, and the lack of capacity of the government, that had just fallen, to carry out its rehabilitation, the price of water multiplied by five and became a large part of the daily family budget. The economic impact of lack of access to water can be also directly linked to the water-related chores that consume time and energy (mainly for women and children), instead of productive or educational activities. The problem is particularly acute in the remote areas of ASAL regions where Action Contre la Faim often observes several hours dedicated daily to water collection during the dry season, or in urban areas where queuing can consume a lot of time.

Water-related diseases also affect food security as well as economic development; sick people represent a loss of working capacity, and the cost in terms of drugs and treatment (even traditional) has an impact on the family budget.

Improving access to water means that families have easy access to infrastructure that supplies water in sufficient quantities. The focus is on local capacity building in order to guarantee the sustainability of this access.

Note. – Water and sanitation projects usually have a positive impact on the social and care environment, see Figure 1.2.

3.2 Intervention domains and activities

Activities can be grouped into different intervention domains as presented in Tables 1.I and 1.II.

Table 1.I: Intervention domains and activities.

Domains	Activities	Domains	Activities
Context analysis and studies	• Socio-economic studies related to water • KAP surveys • Evaluation of existing and potential water resources • Search for new water resources	Solid waste management	• Solid-waste awareness • Refuse pits • Refuse collection • Recycling • Medical-waste management
Water supply	• Construction / rehabilitation of water points: – open wells, boreholes – springs – river / lake catchment – rainwater catchment and ponds • Conservation of water sources • Reforestation • Systems for agriculture and livestock • Installation of water-extraction systems: – manual (e.g. rope and bucket) – gravity – handpumps, motorised pumps – solar systems – wind powered systems • Water-quality analysis and monitoring • Water treatment • Distribution and storage	Vector control	• Risk analysis • Vector-related hygiene awareness • Mosquito-net distribution • Insecticides, rodenticides and disinfection • Fly traps
Excreta disposal	• Promotion of excreta disposal • Construction / rehabilitation of latrines • Composting • Sewerage systems • Sewage treatment	Hygiene promotion	• Construction / rehabilitation of hygiene structures: – showers – laundry areas – hand-washing facilities • Hygiene kits distribution • Hygiene education • Transmission routes for diseases and measures to avoid them • Basic hygiene habits: – use of water – proper use of latrines – hygiene and food
Run-off and wastewater disposal	• Drainage systems • Protection of banks • Wastewater drainage and treatment	Knowledge transfer and training	• Strengthening of local structures and training • Water and sanitation committees set-up • Data collection and transfer of information • Water policy development
		Risk management	• Prevention • Mitigation • Preparedness

Table 1.II: Activities linked to advocacy.

Advocacy in water and sanitation programmes can be developed at three distinct levels:

At the individual level

Information on rights*

Promotion of community mobilisation in order to help people claim their rights*

At local and national levels

Informing relevant people of the problems

Informing relevant people of rights*

Sensitisation regarding the situation and the possible solutions

At the international level, and in developed countries

Diffusing information regarding crisis

Presenting viable solutions to crisis in order to show that solutions exist

Actively involving the international community and political stakeholders; heightening their sense of responsibility

* Claiming the right of access to water and basic sanitation is directly linked to defending the right to life. Meeting this right requires providing infrastructure and systems that allow the communities to live a dignified life, but also requires denouncing situations that prevent communities or people from enjoying this right.

4 Intervention criteria

4.1 General considerations

4.1.1 THE CONCEPT OF VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability concerns the fragility of a group / person in an adverse context. The key elements that define the degree of vulnerability are the exposure to risks and the capacity to cope with these risks.

Globally, the level of vulnerability of a household/individual is determined by the risk of failure of the coping and reaction strategies when faced by a crisis. Vulnerability of a household can thus be defined as an imbalance between the resources required and those available, and an insufficiency of ‘capital’ assets to respond to a situation. It refers to the entire range of factors that place people in danger, the degree of vulnerability for an individual, a household, or a group of people being determined by their exposure to risk factors and by their ability to confront crisis situations and to survive them.

For a given household, population or region, this means the combination of:

- the exposure to different *hazards* or events placing the population at risk;
- and the potential *capacities* / *coping mechanisms* which could be applied to face that risk, anticipate it, resist it, and recover.

The crises/events to which populations are exposed are the circumstances and the conditions over which they have no direct control and which present a risk to their normal functioning. They could be climatic or environmental disasters (earthquakes, floods, droughts etc.), poverty (leading to risky life conditions: precarious housing, poor diet, unsanitary conditions, limited access to education etc.), or social or political conflict (war, moral prejudice, racism, ethnic tension, dictatorship etc.). Like capacities, vulnerabilities can be distinguished according to their physical, social, mental, or spiritual characteristics.

Vulnerability often also involves the degradation of the social and/or natural environment: frequently, vulnerable homes can no longer manage a balance between basic needs over the short term (survival) and their means of existence (livelihood) over the long term.

4.1.2 A BROADER ANALYSIS FOR HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS, CONCEPT OF VITALISM

During the 1990s, there was criticism of humanitarian agencies for providing assistance without taking into consideration the social or political character of conflict-affected populations, thereby reducing human beings only to the vital physiological functions they share with other animals. Focusing on this principle of life as such, humanitarian actors were criticised for giving in to *vitalism*. In concrete terms, the suggestion was that humanitarian assistance should have been designed differently and should have been accompanied by a psycho-social approach to people affected by conflicts, focusing on dignity and human rights (e.g. right to justice).

Applying the same critique may be made of programmes with a ‘technical’ focus. Humanitarian interventions should not be designed only according to physiological criteria, without taking into consideration the social environment and balance of the group concerned. For example, most water-supply and sanitation projects are justified by bad public health indicators, and promote access to sanitary facilities as well as changes in hygiene practices. In the case of pastoral populations, most of the reasons for their bad sanitary environment are constraints inherent to the way of life of such a population, a way of life that usually results itself from adaptation to an arid environment. Any change in such a fragile equilibrium should be carefully introduced, analysing in depth the risks of social disintegration that changes could create, and responses must be closely adapted to those factors. In extreme cases, when negative impacts are too high in relation to the acuteness of needs, the benefit of intervention itself should be questioned.

4.2 General criteria

The main objective of humanitarian aid is to guarantee minimum conditions for the survival of populations faced with a crisis (mortality rate is therefore a key criterion for intervention, see Chapter 2).

Generally speaking, interventions are launched when:

- the survival of populations is threatened;
- local structures are unable to respond to needs and require emergency assistance;
- the crises are recurrent and are leading to a disintegration of the affected communities;
- the general state of under-development prevents populations from reaching minimum standards of living and human dignity;
- communities petition for assistance.

Figure 1.3 shows a theoretical example of how living conditions are affected by a crisis. The evolution depends on the initial vulnerability level of the different groups in the affected population (represented by the different lines), on the deployment of effective coping strategies and on the extent of outside assistance.

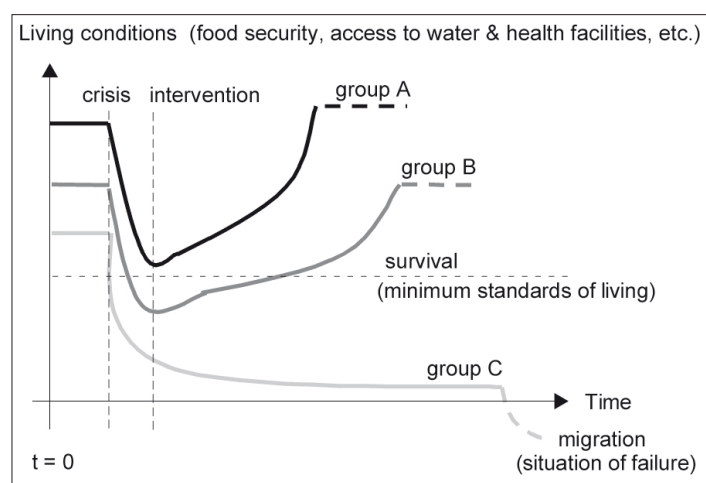


Figure 1.3: Crisis and living conditions.

4.3 Specific criteria

The main situations that justify the application of Action Contre la Faim ‘water and sanitation’ programmes are when:

- populations do not have (or no longer have) access to *sufficient quantities of water* to meet their drinking, domestic, agricultural and livestock needs;
- the *distance from water points* is limiting the socio-economic development of the community;
- the *quality and quantity of water* is such that it heightens the risks of epidemics and water-related diseases;
- the *environmental sanitation conditions* represents a health hazard (contaminated or unhealthy places favourable to the transmission of diseases such as malaria or scrub typhus that are linked to vectors, or diarrhoeal diseases, such as cholera).

Standards, benchmarks and guidelines (see Chapter 2 and Annex 2) permit a quick assessment of a situation in comparison to an established frame of reference; they must however be interpreted according to each specific context (see Box 1.4 and Chapter 2).

The end or the hand-over of a programme will depend on: achieving satisfactory coverage meeting the needs, achieving (or returning to) a state of self-reliance (at the level of the community or the local authorities), the presence of other actors, and the success or failure (blockage) of the programme.

4.4 Target population

Humanitarian organisations focus their work in areas where the needs are greatest, and where they find the most vulnerable populations. The decision of where to direct aid is made without consideration of race, religion or belief (see Action Contre la Faim Charter in ACF presentation). Target populations are:

- *displaced or refugee communities**;
- *communities having lost their livelihoods* due to crisis (open conflict, natural disaster etc.);
- *ethnic or religious minorities* that are victims of the discriminatory behaviour of governments, other communities or groups;
- *isolated communities*, located in inaccessible rural areas, *excluded from development* efforts;
- *communities unable to maintain minimum standards of living and dignity* (e.g. in peri-urban areas).

Within these target populations, specific attention will be paid to the most vulnerable groups, normally: women, children, the elderly, people with handicaps, sick people (e.g. HIV/AIDS-affected people), and marginalized and poor groups.

4.5 Definition of priorities

The needs assessment (health status, sanitary survey, vulnerability and food-security study, infrastructure and resources inspection, hygiene knowledge and practices etc.) done prior to starting action, should give a global picture of the situation.

The analysis of the fulfilment of vital needs is systematic and can, for example, be expressed in number of litres of drinking water per person per day and, in the case of a pastoral affected population, in number of litres per animal per day (see Chapter 2).

* In the case of displaced populations, as they usually mix with the resident populations, the actions carried out must be targeted not only at the displaced people: the residents’ needs must also be assessed and taken into account in order to favour the integration of both communities and to avoid possible conflicts.

Human, financial and technical resources being limited, certain priorities must be set out to ensure minimum fulfilment of basic needs and a maximum impact of action taken:

- Vulnerable people and groups (see Section 4.4) must be attended to as a priority.
- It is better to cover the *entire population to basic standards* than to cover a limited population to high standards (both for public health or food-security issues).
- *Water quantity takes priority*: it is preferable to have an average quantity of average quality water than to have a small quantity of high quality water (without enough quantity of water, personal and domestic hygiene are compromised, as well as parallel activities such as gardening etc.).
- *Breaking the faecal-contamination chain* is a priority (e.g. managing human excreta in a camp) when sanitary risks exist.
- *The coverage of needs must be guaranteed in key places*: health centres and feeding centres, schools and public places.
- All other things being equal, *communities displaying motivation and willingness* should take precedence.
- All other things being equal, one should *intervene where local water resources permit an immediate response*.

5 Intervention principles

The contexts and modalities of water and sanitation interventions are many. Nonetheless, a certain number of principles must be respected during the project-management cycle.

These principles are designed to create a sense of responsibility in the aid worker (but also in all the actors involved in crisis management), who must be accountable to the affected population for their actions. The respect of these principles throughout the whole project cycle should guarantee the relevance, quality, effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention.

5.1 A direct approach to populations

Ensuring that interventions reach the target population in an appropriate way is part of the Action Contre la Faim Charter. This is essential, as it provides a measure of the success of the programme and enables an understanding of any obstacles from local, national or international groups or institutions.

In order to ensure a fair and effective intervention, a direct collaboration with the populations concerned is essential and allows programme staff to do the following:

- analyse contexts and define interventions while listening to the affected populations;
- find the best way of fitting the programme within the existing social dynamics and building partnerships;
- monitor the impact of the programme and avoid the obstacles that might divert the programme from its course.

Although the role of Action Contre la Faim is to work with and for a population, it is important to consider the local institutional capacity and its role in the medium and long term. Therefore, the implementation of programmes may take place with local organisations and state services; the involvement of these partners depends on their aims (political, religious etc.) and their working capacity. If these partners hinder reaching the objectives of the programme, it will then be advisable to develop an independent way of working in order to fulfil identified needs.

Note. – During the last decade, new contexts of intervention obliged humanitarian agencies to develop *remote-management* of interventions. This method of intervention is used in contexts where, for security reasons, permanent access to the field is not possible. Consequently, strict monitoring procedures must be implemented in order to guarantee impacts.

5.2 A response that depends on analysis

In order to understand and clearly define the nature of needs and their causes, and to define the most appropriate response to a given situation, analysis must be done, to understand the different determining factors.

This analysis, carried out both before and during the intervention, must take into account:

The context

- The *factors relating to the crisis* (political, natural etc.).
- The *situation prior to the crisis* (conditions, resources, vulnerabilities, assets etc.).
- The current situation and the *available capacities* and *coping mechanisms* within the affected population.
- The context's possible evolutions.

The population

- Local specificities and *socio-economic, cultural and religious constraints*.
- The nature of the population's needs and expectations.

The environment

- The type of water resources available.
- The climate.

5.3 Multidisciplinary analysis

In order to reduce mortality and to fight effectively against malnutrition, it is essential to take into consideration all their potential determinants (see Figure 1.2). The analysis of the context and the identification phase (in particular, meetings with the population concerned) must involve multidisciplinary teams (for example, water and health and/or food security).

Action Contre la Faim takes an integrated approach to its interventions when appropriate. This integrated approach includes both *curative* and *preventive interventions* within the nutrition, food security, water and sanitation and health (primary care, mental health etc.) sectors. Examples of integrated approaches include water, sanitation and hygiene-promotion activities complementing primary-health projects, or irrigation and water supply for livestock being integral parts of food-security programmes.

An integrated approach does not signify that one organisation must develop a package of several kinds of activity, but that the actions identified as appropriate (from and around the needs of the population concerned) must be co-ordinated throughout all phases of the project. These actions can also be implemented by different actors.

5.4 Involvement of affected communities

The participation of the affected communities in the different phases of the programme is fundamental (identification of needs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), since it guarantees the *relevance* and *sustainability* of actions in relation to needs.

Programmes must aim to have the maximum involvement of the communities concerned. Depending on the intervention context, the type of programme, the phase of the project and the community, the level of involvement varies from simple consultation to proactive participation in the project. A displaced community is usually in a precarious situation, having more or less lost everything, and sometimes it is difficult (or not relevant during the implementation phase) to convince people to participate actively in a project. On the other hand, a stable population should be more easily mobilised to involve itself in the project and its involvement could be a condition for external intervention.

Concerning the implementation phase, community participation can be done through direct contributions (money or material) to infrastructure construction or, more commonly, through physical

work. This reinforces the appropriation of the infrastructure by the community and therefore improves its management.

5.5 Understanding, respecting and integrating local factors

Many communities have a detailed knowledge of the potential of their physical environment to provide resources for production activities or for preventive and curative medicine (and of its potential to cause diseases). In general there is an understanding of the environment, not only in a physical sense but also in the sense of its relationship with social and spiritual factors. This holistic vision of the environment is embedded in many cultural beliefs and habits that affect the use of water and behaviour concerning sanitation (see example in Box 1.5).

The project has to determine how the community's beliefs, knowledge and management of the environment can be dealt with in a positive manner. The most important thing to keep in mind is *respect*. Instead of showing that a taboo or a belief is absurd because it is so in their own culture, staff should work on understandable and appropriate messages that show the causes of a problem and should seek an effective solution with the community. In cases where it proves more convenient to change a certain habit, respect should guide the way the necessary information and encouragement are provided to the community to raise awareness about the benefits of this change.

5.6 Sustainable impact of activities

Achieving a sustainable system is an issue that must be considered from the outset of the programme's definition.

During the first steps of an emergency the initial response must be quick and effective, and self-reliance is not necessarily an objective. However, once basic needs are met, the evolution of the response must be planned with long-term sustainability in mind. In order to achieve this, the factors that must be taken into account are:

- appropriateness of technology for the context and the population;
- quality of design and construction of installations;
- involvement of communities and local structures;
- capacity building and training (management, maintenance etc.).

To meet such conditions, care must be taken to understand and respect socio-cultural and economic factors, to use appropriate technology and to achieve a good transfer of skills.

5.6.1 A RESPONSE ADAPTED TO THE CAPACITIES AND WILLINGNESS OF THE COMMUNITIES

Taking into account the socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the community is a necessary condition for achieving a successful and effective project.

Box 1.5

Perceptions of clean and dirty.

The concepts of clean and dirty, and of pure and contaminated, are well developed in many religions and cultures. Besides the reference to a physical state, these concepts are spiritually important and have a central place in religious ceremonies. Consequently there is a need to be attentive when trying to pass messages. "Clean" can have very different meanings for the project promoters and for the community. It is crucial to examine the traditional understanding of cleanness and dirtiness, purity and contamination before starting to mobilise the community to participate in a sanitation project.

Indeed, technical decisions must be made according to criteria that are not only technical, but also social and cultural, and so the responses chosen must be appropriate to the way of life of the communities concerned.

In order to define a project, it is therefore necessary to:

- evaluate both the *willingness* and the *management capacity* of local communities; – respect *local religions, beliefs and taboos* (in relation to water, sanitation etc.) and adapt technical interventions accordingly;
- evaluate the human, technical, logistical and economic resources required and available for the maintenance of the installations;
- respect the social hierarchy and anticipate potential conflicts that could arise from the construction of water points (what is the purpose of the water point and who is meant to use it?).

5.6.2 APPROPRIATE AND TESTED TECHNIQUES

The use of technologies that are appropriate to the communities' socio-cultural and economic constraints (see Section 5.6.1), as well as the natural environment, is a pre-condition for the success of any project.

The use of techniques of proven effectiveness is the safest way to ensure that the response is both appropriate and sustainable.

However, there are instances when a perfectly appropriate solution is not available. In such cases, the project must be inventive and look actively into solutions designed for other contexts. This requires:

- a precise analysis of the needs and resources;
- a study of the solutions already deployed at the local level, as well as an evaluation of the necessary modifications;
- promotion, at the regional level, of techniques designed by both the local communities and other local stakeholders (South-South exchange).

5.6.3 TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND HANDOVER

From the onset its implementation, the project must allow for a gradual withdrawal of aid, with total withdrawal as the final objective. From the beginning it is important to clarify the different roles of the communities, the traditional authorities and political actors. Specific attention should be given to ownership, accessibility and management. Eventually the project will have to include an official handover of activities and infrastructure to a recognised and legitimate group.

Technical training and maintenance groups are an essential aspect which must go together with the implementation of the project. There is a distinction between training aimed at making operation and maintenance teams self-reliant from a technical point of view, and training of users. Training is carried out on-site, day-by-day, but training sessions are also planned, bringing together technicians and user-committee members (treasurers, plumbers etc.) in order to accumulate experience, publicise local successes, and allow all partners to benefit.

5.7 Coordinating activities

Coordinating the different stakeholders is crucial in order to maximise the value of the available resources, and must be maintained throughout the various phases of the project cycle, from definition to evaluation.

This coordination must include all concerned stakeholders: the communities concerned, local, traditional and administrative authorities, other organisations present (NGOs, United Nations, private sector etc.).

5.8 Community strengthening

Crises often lead to a breakdown of communities. Humanitarian aid must therefore seek to *reinforce social organisation and cohesion* through a communal approach to water management.

Community mobilisation and participation during the project, as well as water-point committees, is a way of achieving this objective. It must be handled in a way that is both participative and democratic, thus allowing for the promotion of these values.

5.9 Gender issues

During the project-definition phase, it is important to understand the role and status (specific vulnerability) of women within the community, as well as the part they will come to play within the project itself.

Where possible, women should be employed for the hygiene-promotion, sanitation, and water-management components of a project. As women are almost always responsible for children's education and housekeeping, their inclusion is a necessary element of the project.

Beyond this 'technical' aspect, favouring the active participation of women in project activities and in the building of committees has the added value of *strengthening their role* in the community.

5.10 Capitalising on experience and analysis

Implementing a project allows the gathering of a considerable amount of information, be it on the general context or on the methodologies and technologies employed. All this information is of great value to the communities, the local stakeholders and the various actors who may wish to operate in the area.

Consequently, the collection, analysis and sharing of information is invariably an objective of any programme. This involves:

- the systematic collection of trustworthy data;
- the use of databases to facilitate information management and analysis;
- the use of geographic information systems (GIS) for a clear and attractive analysis;
- capitalising on the working methodologies through notes and manuals;
- the sharing and promotion of the body of information gathered.

5.11 Respect for the environment

Projects always have a potential impact on the natural environment. Therefore, during each intervention, the environmental risks must be assessed and the impact should be minimised.

In every case, it is important to sensitise the affected community and other local stakeholders about the proper management of their water resources and the environmental risk factors.

It is particularly important to avoid the *over-exploitation* of aquifers: during the implementation of drilling or well-digging programmes, the available resources must be systematically assessed (through geophysical studies, pumping tests etc.). This helps determine the number of water points and appropriately size the pumping systems chosen. Gathering meteorological information is also essential. If there is a risk of exhausting underground water resources, alternative resources must be considered.

The creation of refugee or displaced people's camps generates a risk of *deforestation*, of *over-exploitation* and of *contamination* of resources (e.g. by refuse and faeces), and constant vigilance is required regarding these risks. Also, during the implementation of water-treatment projects, the disposal of sedimentation residues must be carried out far from water courses and surface-water bodies.