

Improving coordination in low-resource settings

Since you are reading this toolkit, you may have already identified a need to improve collaboration between WASH and NTDs stakeholders in your setting. However, you may be concerned about the financial implications of doing so. While you may not have access at this time to new funding for developing an entirely new comprehensive WASH and NTDs initiative, lack of new funding should not mean that nothing can be done. This resource provides some ideas for action in low-resource settings, which can be used based on the circumstances in your own settings.

What are you trying to achieve?

It is important to be clear on what improvements you think are needed to the current way in which your programme is being implemented. In the short term, you may want to:

- **Improve coordination.**
- **Create opportunities to exchange and learn from experience on technical programming aspects.**
- **Identify opportunities for mobilizing new funding (from domestic or external resources).**



These steps should help you move towards medium- to long-term objectives, once a level of collaboration has been established, such as developing a national framework to guide intersectoral NTDs initiatives, or implementing a new large-scale, comprehensive programme.

What activities are needed in the short term?

When starting a process of collaboration building, the activities needed may be very basic, with the aim of establishing a collaborative working relationship and a shared understanding of objectives and implementation across NTDs and WASH stakeholders. Consider the following basic steps:


- Be clear on where both WASH and NTDs sit in the current government agenda and what the key priorities are. Use the **Tool 4: Messages for engagement** 🗣️ to identify the mutual benefits of WASH and NTDs collaboration, and the importance of both areas to the national development agenda.
- Gain an understanding of which agencies are working where, and what their key focus is, by contacting key WASH government departments or NGOs. **Supplementary tool: WASH-NTD partner form** 📄 may help you capture this information. Find out: are there plans for WASH infrastructure investment in a specific district or region in which the NTD programme is operating? Are there opportunities to influence which areas and communities will receive infrastructure investment?
- Identify existing coordination structures – are there any WASH sector working groups, other technical working groups or annual review forums? When and how often do they meet? Try to join these groups and attend their meetings, even if as an observer initially. This requires establishing a relationship with the lead agency or person in charge of the meetings. This will help you get to know relevant individuals, and understand the key priorities and ways of working in the group/sector. It will also help you identify potential individual champions for integration, who may become important allies in future collaborative initiatives as advocates within their own organizations and sectors. At the same time, make sure you invite these allies into other relevant groups, such as the NTDs task force or annual review. Collaboration

often starts between individuals rather than organizations, and a good working relationship can help you convince your respective organizations to work together. You may need to be patient and be prepared for some resistance within your own (and your allies') organizations to changing established ways of working until the benefits of collaboration become clear.

- Once you have identified key individuals with whom collaboration is useful, you may want to start meeting informally to exchange ideas or discuss specific technical issues – for example, what are the successful approaches for behaviour change currently being implemented, and are there aspects that can be introduced to your programme? What are the ways in which other programmes are currently being implemented – and do they include potential entry points for NTD control? Are there useful lessons for working in specific geographic or cultural settings? These informal meetings can form the basis for future technical working groups or learning initiatives, and do not have cost implications as they can simply involve visiting the offices of an ally organization.
- The informal discussions should help you identify relatively simple programming changes and ideas for integration. For example, you may:
 - Find ways of engaging an NGO experienced in WASH and behaviour change programme delivery to help develop health and hygiene promotion materials for your programme, or to deliver behaviour change activities during annual MDA campaigns.
 - Adapt your M&E framework to include information on access to WASH services, using data from existing WASH sector government monitoring systems, to inform your own plans and programming approach; the indicators included in **Tool 11: WASH-NTD indicators and logframe**  tool may be useful for this purpose.
 - Identify the schedules and timeframe for planning processes at various levels, and ways to influence them so that disease burden is considered when allocating resources for WASH service delivery, using **Tool 6: Situation analysis for WASH and NTDs planning: protocol and methods** .

Taking collaboration to the next level

Once a relationship has been built, you may jointly identify new actions that require increased human and financial resources. Consider:

- **Are there resources in your existing programme or budget that can be used to support these activities?** For example, can an existing member of staff be appointed as a focal point for collaboration with the WASH sector? Can any funds in your current budget be used differently, for example to support regular coordination meetings, or to engage a larger set of stakeholders in current plans? If most or all of your funds are tied to specific activities, look for areas of underspend, or for where an integrated approach can improve the implementation likelihood, quality and sustainability of the activity, so that the (re)allocation of resources can be justified in your regular reports.
- **Can any of the potential activities you have identified be included in plans and budgets for the forthcoming financial year?** Look carefully at the budgeting and planning schedule and include realistic amounts when submitting your plans.
- **Are there any partners with an interest in integration who can provide “seed” funding?** For example, for an initial stakeholder workshop (see below). Consider what sort of information they may need based on their priorities in order to support the workshop, and meet with them to discuss your ideas. You may find **Tool 4: Messages for engagement**  helpful for this purpose.

- **Are there any potential opportunities for which grants may become available for integrated programme implementation?** For example, from a donor agency. Work with your allies and potential implementing partners to develop and submit a proposal (proposal development may also be the purpose or output of a planning workshop).

Summary of possible actions for various funding scenarios

No financial implications	Using existing resources differently	Low-cost (limited new resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map WASH partners and activities • Attend existing WASH sector meetings • Invite WASH sector stakeholders to NTD meetings • Undertake joint advocacy on the need to link WASH and NTDs • Learn/exchange on technical programme aspects through informal discussion • Influence WASH planning processes to improve targeting of endemic districts/communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt an existing programme role to be focal person for coordination • Build integrated activities and coordination needs into forthcoming plans and budgets • Adapt M&E framework to gather useful information (e.g. access to WASH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct coordination/planning/resource mobilization workshop • Involve WASH stakeholders in developing promotion materials and implementing behaviour change activities in MDA campaigns • Embed NTD-related WASH behaviours in WASH behaviour change initiatives (e.g. Global Handwashing Day celebrations or other campaigns) • Form technical working groups to resolve specific issues

Conducting a coordination workshop within low-resource setting

Use with **Tool 5: Initial cross-sectoral meeting for WASH and NTDs: annotated agenda** .

Workshops are often organized when a new grant or initiative are being planned; when there is no new funding on the table, workshops can help increase momentum and formalize the willingness of WASH and NTDs agencies and specific individuals to work together.

Tips

- Be clear about the **purpose** of the workshop – improving coordination, developing new programming approaches, attracting new funding, etc. – and ensure that this understanding is shared between the organizers, sponsors and participants as well (be careful not to set expectations regarding new funding opportunities – since if these do not materialize, stakeholders may disengage from the process).
- Set out clear **deliverables**, to keep all stakeholders engaged in the process, for example:
- A time-bound action plan focused on improvement of existing interventions and coordination.
 - Terms of reference for undertaking research, or seeking new funding – for example developing a proposal and identifying who to approach.
- **Invite the right people:**
- Keep the number of participants manageable (30 people maximum).
 - Ensure the timing does not conflict with major meetings or workshops in the other sectors.
 - Share as much information as possible in advance on the meeting purpose so that the right individuals are assigned to attend and are well-prepared.
 - Ensure balanced representation of WASH and NTDs partners to give a sense of a shared agenda; invite subnational NTD programme leads as well as their WASH counterparts, for their engagement and to avoid the workshop resulting in unrealistic demands. Ideally, the meeting should be co-led by both WASH and NTDs representatives.

- Include sufficiently senior staff, who are able to make decisions on behalf of their organization and lend credibility to the process. Senior officials from WASH and NTD-related government departments should, at the very least, open the meeting.

→ **When developing the agenda:**

- Know your participants: what knowledge do they have of technical aspects, institutional and programme structures, and the process undertaken so far? What information will they need to participate effectively? Avoid oversimplification for very informed audiences, but include all relevant information such as disease distribution, WASH-related risk factors, and WASH conditions in endemic areas. This will help avoid disengagement, as well as tie in with all participants' priorities and motivations.
 - Conduct the workshop in the local language (if external facilitators are used, take into account time for simultaneous translation).
 - Use clear terminology and ensure all participants have a shared understanding of key concepts and acronyms; do not assume that what is common knowledge to you is understood by others.
 - Appoint good facilitators, familiar with the local context and current programmes and structures, who are able to draw on real-life examples that participants can relate to.
 - Allocate sufficient time for work and discussion, keeping presentations and speeches to a minimum.
- **Conduct preparatory and follow-up meetings** with a small group to clarify responsibilities and next steps. Use the opportunity to brief senior officials, to help ensure they understand the purpose of the meeting. Appoint someone responsible for following up all the agreed actions.
- Ensure all relevant **data** (disease burden, WASH access) is collected in advance, properly analysed and well-presented to avoid disputes and enable moving quickly into discussion and decision-making. **WASH-NTD supplementary tool: WASH-NTD partner form** 📄 and **Supplementary tool: Situation analysis findings presentation template** 📄 are helpful tools for gathering and analysing this information.
- **During the workshop**, guide participants away from coming up with blueprint approaches such as setting up new coordination structures (as this requires new funding, and can also undermine existing structures), or making unrealistic demands from other sectors and programmes.
- Consider relevant government visions and plans – how does improved collaboration on WASH and NTDs help achieve national targets on poverty, health, education and economic growth?
 - Map existing activities and how they can be enhanced for achieving better WASH and NTDs outcomes. Focus on “easy wins” and on potential impact, using commonly agreed definitions so that all participants are using the same criteria when making choices.
 - Map existing coordination structures that need to be reinforced.

If a need for new activities arises, discuss these carefully, identify opportunities for new funding, and develop an action plan or terms of reference to deliver these. This should help avoid including unrealistic or unnecessary activities in your action plan. Ensure the outcomes and suggestions from the workshop are well documented, and shared with all participants.