

## Terms of Reference

### WASH OFFICER -P3 - RUYIGI

---

#### MISSION LOCATION

Ruyigi, Burundi

---

#### DURATION

3 months

---

#### OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Since the eastern DRC situation deteriorated, Burundi has faced an unprecedented mass influx of refugees. As of 6 March 2025, over 63,000 refugees have crossed the country, straining water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities. The Government of Burundi has accommodated them in three temporary sites: Rugombo, Cibitoke Zone, and Gihanga. The rapid displacement has overwhelmed infrastructure, causing severe public health risks, particularly for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Water shortages have forced many refugees to rely on contaminated sources, increasing the risk of cholera and diarrheal diseases. Inadequate latrines have led to open defecation, worsening hygiene, and protection concerns. Poor solid waste management further exacerbates disease outbreaks.

Recognizing the urgency, Burundi granted prima facie refugee status to all Congolese asylum seekers on 19 February. Since 24 February, UNHCR, in collaboration with the General Commissariat for Migration (CGM) and the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (ONPRA), has launched a basic refugee registration at Rugombo, which now hosts over 45,000 refugees. On 28 February 2025, UNHCR declared a Level 2 Emergency, activating surge capacity and intensifying the response across multiple sectors.

The rapid increase in arrivals has pushed temporary sites beyond capacity. Severe water shortages have forced refugees to rely on unsafe sources, increasing the risks of cholera, diarrheal diseases, and respiratory infections. The lack of sufficient latrines has led to open defecation, worsening hygiene conditions, and protection risks, particularly for women and girls. Inadequate waste management has further contributed to deteriorating living conditions and disease outbreaks.

A WASH Officer is needed to coordinate partners, strengthen response efforts, and ensure access to safe water and sanitation for refugees and host communities. The officer will facilitate coordination among UNHCR, government authorities, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners while ensuring integration with health, shelter, and protection sectors.

Immediate priorities include expanding water supply infrastructure through emergency water trucking, borehole drilling, and purification measures. Large-scale latrine construction is required to address sanitation gaps and prevent open defecation. Hygiene promotion efforts will focus on handwashing, menstrual hygiene, and disease prevention, while solid waste management systems will be strengthened to mitigate environmental health risks. The WASH Officer will provide technical guidance and training to national partners and refugee community volunteers to enhance WASH operations and sustainability.

Real-time WASH monitoring systems will be implemented using GIS tools and SDG 6 indicators to track refugee access to services, inform decision-making, and improve accountability. Regular reporting to UNHCR, donors, and stakeholders will ensure transparency and responsiveness to emerging needs.

Despite efforts, significant challenges remain, including overstretched infrastructure, high disease risks, security, and logistical constraints, and insufficient funding for transitioning from emergency response to sustainable WASH solutions. The existing water supply systems are at a breaking point, requiring rapid expansion.

The Wash officer will be instrumental in scaling up life-saving interventions, strengthening partner coordination, and ensuring that WASH services align with humanitarian best practices and UNHCR standards. Without immediate WASH interventions, thousands of refugees remain at risk of preventable diseases and worsening conditions. The WASH Officer will ensure access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene, addressing urgent humanitarian needs while contributing to long-term resilience.

## AIM OF THE MISSION

---

This deployment aims to provide urgent technical leadership, coordination, and implementation support for the WASH emergency response in Burundi, ensuring that refugees and host communities have immediate access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services in line with UNHCR standards, national regulations, and international humanitarian principles. The focus is on rapidly scaling up WASH interventions to mitigate the public health risks associated with the ongoing mass influx of refugees from DRC, preventing waterborne diseases, improving sanitation conditions, and promoting hygiene awareness among affected populations.

Through close collaboration with government authorities, UNHCR field teams, implementing partners, and relevant humanitarian actors, the mission will enhance the coordination and efficiency of WASH service delivery across temporary sites and affected host communities. It will ensure that immediate needs are met while aligning refugee WASH services with national development plans and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 targets, advocating for integrating refugee populations into broader water and sanitation systems.

The mission will strengthen the operational capacity of UNHCR's WASH partners through targeted technical support, training, and community engagement. Interventions will be designed to be inclusive, addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be reinforced to facilitate data-driven decision-making, ensure accountability to affected populations, and enable timely adjustments based on evolving needs.

This deployment will stabilize WASH service delivery during the emergency phase, ensuring an immediate and effective response while setting the stage for longer-term solutions. By rapidly mobilizing expertise and resources, the mission will help bridge critical gaps in emergency WASH services, safeguard public health, and strengthen preparedness for future humanitarian challenges, ensuring the dignity and well-being of refugees and host communities in Burundi.

## MISSION OBJECTIVES

---

- Ensure immediate WASH service delivery by rapidly scaling up water supply, sanitation, and hygiene promotion activities in refugee-hosting areas, ensuring compliance with UNHCR WASH standards, Sphere guidelines, and national regulations.
- Enhance coordination and leadership in the emergency WASH response by working closely with government authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, and other humanitarian actors to streamline service provision, address critical gaps, and implement a harmonized approach.
- Improve access to safe and sufficient water by overseeing the rapid expansion of water infrastructure, including borehole drilling, emergency water trucking, and water purification initiatives, ensuring equitable distribution and effective management.
- Strengthen sanitation facilities and waste management systems by coordinating the construction and maintenance of latrines, implementing solid waste disposal strategies, and promoting environmental health initiatives to reduce immediate disease risks.
- Promote hygiene awareness and behavioral change through targeted campaigns focusing on handwashing, menstrual hygiene management, safe water storage, and disease prevention, ensuring active participation from refugee communities.
- Ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive WASH programming by addressing the specific needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, promoting their participation in WASH decision-making and service provision.
- Build the technical capacity of key stakeholders by providing targeted training for UNHCR staff, partners, and refugee communities on WASH best practices, infrastructure maintenance, and community-led hygiene promotion.

- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and data-driven decision-making by implementing real-time WASH assessments, tracking key indicators in the WASH Monitoring System (WMS), and ensuring that interventions are responsive to rapidly evolving needs.
- Support advocacy efforts for long-term WASH investments and refugee inclusion by engaging with government authorities, donors, and development partners to reinforce the need for sustainable funding and refugee integration into national water and sanitation systems.
- Mitigate public health risks and enhance preparedness for disease outbreaks by supporting contingency planning for cholera and other WASH-related diseases.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

---

Under the supervision of the Head of the Sub-Office, the Wash Officer will ensure that water, sanitation, and hygiene services meet UNHCR standards, national regulations, and global humanitarian best practices.

Key Responsibilities:

### 1. Coordination and Leadership

- Lead and coordinate the activities of WASH implementing partners, government authorities, UN agencies, and NGOs to ensure an efficient and harmonized emergency response.
- Support immediate actions to stabilize WASH services in refugee-hosting areas while aligning with national water and sanitation strategies.
- Advocate for adequate funding and technical support to address urgent WASH needs during the emergency phase.

### 2. Water Supply and Sanitation Infrastructure

- Oversee the rapid expansion and improvement of emergency water supply systems, including borehole drilling, trucking, and purification, ensuring equitable access to safe drinking water.
- Coordinate the urgent construction and maintenance of sanitation facilities, ensuring sufficient latrines, waste disposal systems, and drainage infrastructure in temporary sites.
- Implement environmental health strategies to mitigate public health risks, including solid waste management and vector control, focusing on immediate disease prevention.

### 3. Hygiene Promotion and Community Engagement

- Lead hygiene promotion efforts by implementing targeted education campaigns on handwashing, menstrual hygiene management, and safe water storage to prevent disease outbreaks.
- Ensure inclusive and gender-sensitive WASH programming that prioritizes the needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- Strengthen community participation by engaging refugees in WASH service design, operation, and maintenance, ensuring ownership and sustainability during the emergency phase.

### 4. Technical Support and Capacity Building

- Provide hands-on technical guidance and emergency response training to UNHCR staff, implementing partners, and refugee community volunteers.
- Strengthen the capacity of local actors in managing WASH infrastructure, hygiene promotion, and emergency preparedness for potential WASH-related disease outbreaks.
- Ensure that all interventions align with Sphere Standards, UNHCR's WASH guidelines, and national policies, while adapting to the urgency of the emergency context.

### 5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

- Implement real-time WASH monitoring systems, including GIS mapping and SDG 6 indicators, to track progress, gaps, and emerging challenges.
- Collect and analyze data using UNHCR's WASH Monitoring System (WMS) to inform rapid decision-making and adapt interventions to evolving needs.

- Establish immediate feedback mechanisms for refugees to report concerns and contribute to service improvements.
- Prepare concise and regular reports on emergency WASH activities, highlighting key achievements, urgent needs, and funding gaps.

## 6. Cross-Sectoral Integration and Advocacy

- Ensure WASH interventions are closely coordinated with health, nutrition, shelter, and protection sectors to maximize impact and avoid duplication.
- Advocate for emergency WASH investments and short-term infrastructure improvements in refugee-hosting areas by engaging donors, government agencies, and development partners.
- Support contingency planning for potential WASH-related disease outbreaks, particularly cholera and acute watery diarrhea, ensuring rapid preparedness and response measures.

## PROFILE

---

### Essential Requirements:

- Experience: 6 years of relevant experience with an undergraduate degree, 5 years with a graduate degree, or 4 years with a doctorate.
- Education: Advanced university degree in Civil Engineering, Water and Sanitation Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Public Health, or related field.

### Technical and Field Experience:

- Significant experience in humanitarian WASH operations, particularly in emergencies and refugee responses.
- Expertise in water supply, sanitation, hygiene promotion, and waste management.
- Demonstrated ability to respond to public health emergencies.
- Prior experience working with UN agencies, NGOs, government bodies, and local partners in emergency WASH responses.
- Experience working in low-resource, high-pressure environments, particularly in refugee and IDP settings.

### Leadership and Coordination:

- Strong experience in leading and coordinating WASH response teams in humanitarian crises.
- Proven ability to work across multiple sectors, including health, protection, and shelter, ensuring integrated WASH interventions.
- Experience in capacity building and training, particularly in quickly equipping national staff, implementing partners, and community WASH volunteers with essential skills for immediate operations.

### Monitoring, Data Collection, and Reporting:

- Experience in real-time WASH service monitoring using GIS tools and SDG indicators.
- Strong reporting skills, including preparing donor reports, situation updates, and needs assessments to inform immediate decision-making.

### Desirable Experience:

- Experience managing large-scale WASH infrastructure projects (since this deployment focuses on immediate emergency response rather than long-term infrastructure development).
- Experience in community-based WASH programs, including hygiene promotion, risk awareness, and participatory approaches (valuable but secondary to emergency technical expertise).
- Ability to advocate for long-term WASH solutions and sustainable development strategies in alignment with SDG 6 (important for long-term planning but not a primary focus for an emergency response).
- Ability to develop long-term evidence-based WASH strategies and adjust interventions based on extensive data-driven decision-making (more relevant for sustained interventions rather than immediate emergency response).

### Personal Characteristics:

- Strong Leadership & Decision-Making Skills: Managing complex emergency WASH responses and leading teams effectively in high-pressure environments.
- Analytical & Problem-Solving Skills: Capacity to analyze WASH-related challenges and develop innovative, practical, and sustainable solutions.

- **Communication & Advocacy:** Strong ability to engage with diverse stakeholders, from government officials to refugee communities, to advocate for WASH interventions.
- **Cultural Sensitivity & Inclusiveness:** Deep understanding of humanitarian principles, committed to ensuring equitable access to WASH services for all affected populations.
- **Adaptability & Resilience:** Willingness to work in complex, unpredictable conditions while maintaining a proactive and solutions-oriented mindset.
- **Teamwork & Collaboration:** Demonstrated ability to work effectively with cross-functional teams, partners, and refugee communities.