International Medical Corps

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

Providing safe water, sanitation, environmental health and hygiene services is fundamental to protecting health, preventing disease and preserving dignity.

About 2.2 billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, while 3 billion lack access to improved sanitation—leading to 1.7 billion cases of diarrheal disease among children each year. Even though diarrheal diseases are preventable and treatable, nearly 444,000 children under 5 die from them annually. About 15% of health facilities have no water services, and 11% lack sanitation services.

Most of the world's population faces water insecurity, lacking consistent access to safe drinking water because of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, and poor water management. These factors exacerbate scarcity, which can lead to conflict between communities.

Safe water, improved sanitation and safe hygiene are vital for human health and development. That's why International Medical Corps strives to meet these key needs, regardless of challenges. As part of our overall approach to health, we prioritize preventing diseases linked to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Half of the global population lives in water-stressed regions. WASH-related diseases account for half of the hospital-bed occupancy in developing countries, increasing the burden on healthcare systems that are often overstretched. Children who are malnourished and people with impaired immunity are more susceptible to life-threatening diarrhea.

With decades of experience, International Medical Corps implements WASH and infection-prevention and control (IPC) interventions in healthcare facilities, communities, schools and displacement camps, as well as during recovery and development efforts. We collaborate with local leaders to ensure safe drinking water, enhance sanitation, promote hygiene and strengthen IPC measures in health facilities.

Water Supply

International Medical Corps provides reliable access to safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene through water trucking, and by providing and rehabilitating boreholes, wells, piped networks, and storage and treatment systems. We solarize water systems where appropriate and monitor water quality to meet recognized standards.

Sanitation

International Medical Corps collaborates with communities to build safe, accessible sanitation facilities that are usable day and night. International Medical Corps works with affected populations and local authorities to design sustainable sanitation solutions that meet immediate needs and support long-term recovery.

Hygiene Promotion

International Medical Corps promotes comprehensive hygiene practices—covering personal, domestic, environmental and food hygiene—to reduce transmission of disease. Our behavior change-related communication strategies are context-specific and developed in close coordination with communities, ministries of health and the Global WASH Cluster, ensuring cultural relevance and local ownership of programming and infrastructure.

Wash In Health Facilities

International Medical Corps strengthens WASH infrastructure in health facilities to ensure continuous access to safe drinking water, as well as adequate sanitation and hygiene services. Training health workers in IPC measures and safe medical-waste management prevents healthcare-associated infections while bolstering local health-system resilience. Building local capacity is central to our approach, ensuring preparedness for future public health emergencies.

Public Health Responses

To curb transmission of infectious disease—such as during our 2026 responses to Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Marburg in Ethiopia—our WASH team provides safe drinking water and sanitation facilities while advocating for proper hygiene practices and IPC measures that meet all global WASH standards, ensuring safety for staff, patients and visitors. We also utilize risk-communication and community-engagement strategies to promote disease-reducing behaviors.

Environmental Safeguarding and Sustainability

International Medical Corps incorporates environmental safeguards and asset-lifecycle planning into WASH programming. We use approaches such as solar-powered water systems, rainwater harvesting and infrastructure adapted to drought, flooding and other extreme weather. The community water-management structures and training we provide strengthen local ownership and sustainability.

International Medical Corps delivers lifesaving WASH interventions in community settings and institutional facilities during acute emergencies. Beyond immediate response efforts, we are committed to addressing long-term challenges such as climate resilience, persistent water scarcity and inadequate sanitation.

Afghanistan

International Medical Corps addresses critical WASH needs in vulnerable communities by increasing water supply, improving sanitation through community-led programs and behavior-change strategies, and strengthening family-health action groups to reinforce household hygiene and the safe use of water and sanitation services.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Over the course of the 2026 Ebola response, International Medical Corps has integrated WASH and IPC interventions into Ebola treatment centers, transit centers and frontline health facilities. Our teams are supporting safe water supply, chlorination, sanitation, handwashing, environmental cleaning and healthcare-waste management, helping to protect patients, health workers and communities while enabling safe screening, isolation and treatment.

Ethiopia

International Medical Corps delivers comprehensive WASH services for conflict-, displacement- and drought-affected communities and health facilities, including water-system rehabilitation and solarization, sanitation, water trucking, hygiene supplies and environmental health. During the Marburg response, teams supported treatment and screening infrastructure, IPC, health-worker training and community risk communication.

Gaza

International Medical Corps integrates a robust WASH program into the field hospitals we have operated since January 2024, providing such essential services as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion. Despite water-salinity challenges and security constraints, we have successfully deployed water-supply systems such as desalination plants, and maintained high water-quality standards through continuous monitoring. Our WASH interventions also include solid-waste management, IPC and the distribution of hygiene kits, contributing to a safe and hygienic environment in our field hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, International Medical Corps helps conflict-affected communities and displacement sites by providing safe water from boreholes and other systems, sanitation, handwashing facilities, and hygiene supplies and promotion. Our WASH coordination and community engagement help reduce disease risks and sustain services.

Pakistan

Our holistic approach to WASH programming emphasizes community management of WASH infrastructure for sustainability and integrates with the health sector to enhance health outcomes by improving sanitation in facilities and schools. We collaborate with government departments to rehabilitate non-functional water supply schemes—for example, our reverse-osmosis system rehabilitation has provided safe drinking water to more than 15,000 people.

South Sudan

International Medical Corps is supporting Ebola preparedness and readiness in high-risk areas of South Sudan by establishing and expanding infectious diseases units. WASH and IPC support includes appropriate site layout and zoning, safe patient flow, water and sanitation, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection, healthcare waste management, and infrastructure improvements. We have also established screening and referral units at primary healthcare facilities, including critical WASH and IPC services. In flood-prone areas, we are strengthening flood-resilient WASH and IPC facilities to help maintain continuity of essential health services during flooding and other environmental hazards.

Ukraine

International Medical Corps has been a critical player in Ukraine's emergency WASH response since the full-fledged Russian invasion of February 2022, addressing the severe infrastructure impacts of the ongoing conflict. We have expanded our efforts to support WASH needs and broader infrastructure rehabilitation, particularly in health facilities crucial for millions of Ukrainians. Our interventions have included wells, sanitation services and upgrades to essential building systems, helping facilities maintain safe services and IPC under difficult operating conditions.

Venezuela

Following the June 2026 earthquakes, International Medical Corps integrated WASH into its Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Type 1 mobile medical unit and community response in La Guaira. By mid-September, teams had delivered more than 1.2 million liters of safe water, set up 32 temporary toilets across transitional camps and conducted hygiene-promotion activities, along with supporting IPC and safe services at the EMT.

Yemen

Since 2012, International Medical Corps has provided WASH services to more than 3 million Yemenis, helping address urgent needs in a country where 17.4 million people—or half the population—require humanitarian aid. Our work includes supplying clean water to nearly 800,000 people through rehabilitated systems and solar pumps, and promoting better hygiene among more than 1 million. We also work with communities to build resilient, sustainable WASH infrastructure that withstands weather challenges.

Zimbabwe

In 2026, our WASH teams rehabilitated more than 170 water pumps, solarized 45 water points, repaired boreholes and conducted water-quality monitoring and disinfection. We also provided community water committees and pump caretakers with training to operate and maintain systems, supporting longer-term access to safe water.

International Medical Corps

www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org

A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

October 2026

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