

International Labor Organization (ILO)



International
Labour
Organization

The only tripartite U.N. agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

WHAT IS ILO

ILO CONVENTIONS AND WASH

International labour standards are legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers) setting out basic principles and rights at work. They are either Conventions, which are legally binding international treaties that may be ratified by member States, or Recommendations, which serve as non-binding guidelines. ILO's several instruments address water, sanitation and hygiene in the workplace.

Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)

defines the term health, in relation to work as "affecting health which are directly related to safety and hygiene at work". This definition is critical to provisions for the access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, particularly due to the lack of clear distinction between working and living environment for workers in certain sectors.

Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)

provides that measures should be taken "As appropriate for different branches of economic activity and different types of work" among them "sanitary installations, washing facilities, facilities for changing and storing clothes, supply of drinking water, and any other welfare facilities connected with occupational safety and health."

The Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)

mandates occupational health services to "supervise sanitary installations and other facilities for the workers, such as drinking water, canteens and living accommodation, when provided by the employer" (Paragraph 8(b)).

Examples of instruments relating to WASH in specific areas of work:

ILO Recommendation No. 115 of 1961 on Workers' Housing

specifies that where housing and accommodation for single workers or workers separated from their families is collective, the competent authorities should establish standards providing, as a minimum, for adequate supply of safe water.

Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102)

specifies guidelines for the establishment of canteens, mess rooms and other food and rest-related facilities. The facilities so provided should include at least "an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water."

Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964 (No. 120)

Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110)

Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)

Safety and Health in Mines Recommendation, 1995 (No. 183)

ILO, WORKERS AND WASH

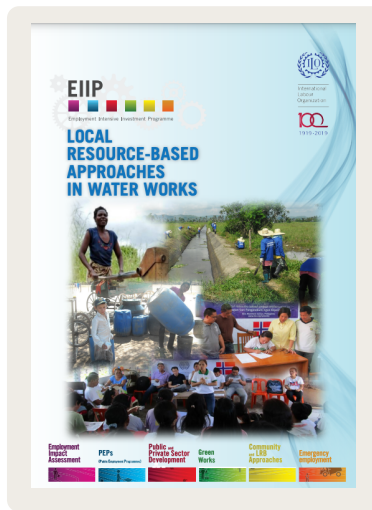
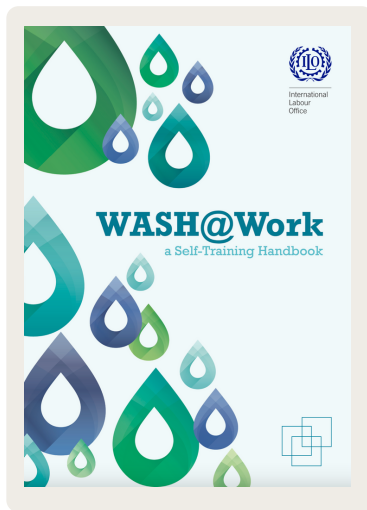
In 1998, all ILO members committed with the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which focused on the protection of the fundamental principles and rights for the promotion and enhancement of decent work. Several of ILO's focus on decent work and WASH have cross-cutting areas.

Sanitation workers

Water fetching, water collection
by women and girls

Formal water sector

PUBLICATIONS



THE WAY FORWARD

I share ILO's "local resources- based approach" of empowering local communities, particularly rural communities by valuing the knowledge of local people and building their capacities. There is a lot we can learn from traditional community aqueducts, for instance. The value and expertise are not only link to job opportunities in WASH sector but also contribute to their enjoyment of human rights to water and sanitation.

Pedro Arrojo-Agudo,
UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

*The Special Rapporteur held a meeting with ILO representatives on 14 January 2021

PARTNERING WITH ORGANIZATIONS
WORKING ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO
SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

Who's who
in WASH?