



# Ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation in informal settlements

Tools available under the Protocol on Water and Health

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# Access to water and sanitation in informal settlements – Challenges



**1) Infrastructure-related challenges** – Lack of connection to the water and sanitation networks

- As a result, dwellers have to collect water from unprotected sources (e.g. polluted wells) or rely on informal providers

**2) Affordability concerns**

- Price paid can be up to 5-10 times higher than the price paid per liter by those connected in formal settlements!

**3) Lack of good quality, disaggregated data**

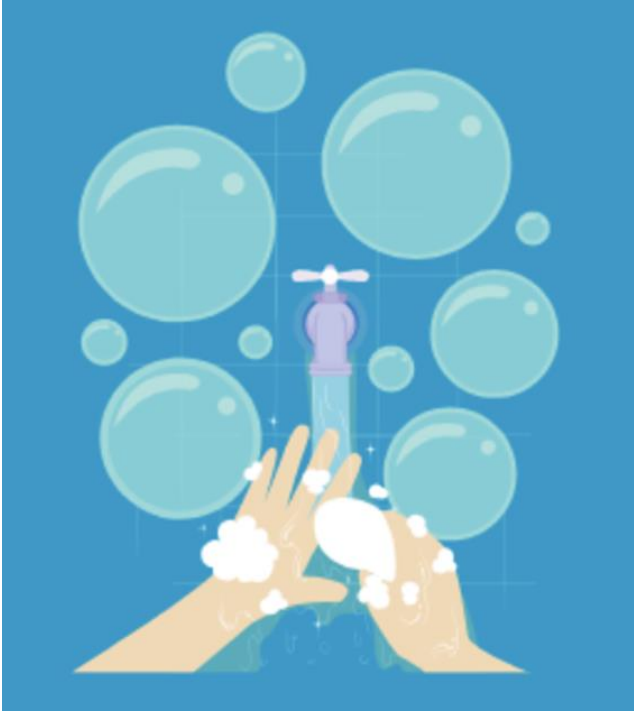
- Dwellers of informal settlements often absent from national statistics
- Consequent lack of appropriate monitoring frameworks

4) Lack of adequate **policy/legislative frameworks** and/or legal impediments

5) **Vulnerability of residents** can compound challenges (e.g. lack of political representations and mechanisms to voice complaints)



# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic



- Safe and sufficient water, sanitation and hygienic conditions are key to **protect human health** during infectious diseases outbreaks such as COVID-19 (e.g. frequent handwashing with soap for infection prevention and control)
- COVID-19 situation **aggravates existing challenges** in informal settlements, including lack of access to water and sanitation
- Some **COVID-19 related measures** (e.g. lockdown) can have **disproportionate impact** on dwellers of informal settlements and worsen their living conditions (e.g. lack of a toilet at home may cause exposure to disease)
- **Vulnerability of residents** can compound challenges (e.g. inability to pay for health-care services)
- Need to take **targeted action** to address immediate problems but also **improve underlying conditions** in order to build resilience



# A framework for action - the Protocol on Water and Health



Unique international agreement aimed at protecting human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by reducing water-related diseases

Obligation of pursuing aims of access to drinking water and sanitation for everyone and special focus on equity

27 countries are Parties to the Protocol

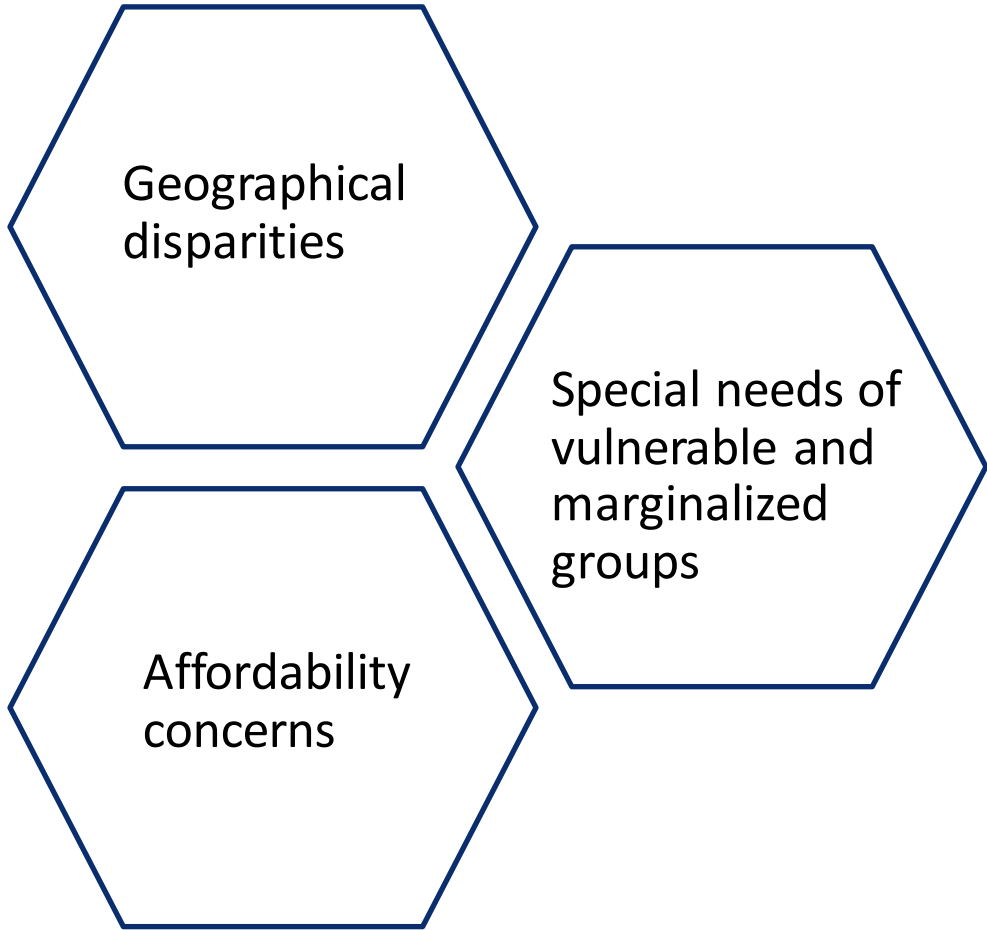
UNECE and WHO/Europe provide joint secretariat services



# A special focus on equitable access

*“Equitable access to water, adequate in terms both of quantity and of quality, should be provided for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion (Art. 5 )”*

Three dimensions to consider when it comes to equity in access to WASH:



# How to improve equitable access? A step-wise approach



**2. The Equitable Access Score-card**  
Identify “equity gaps” through self-assessment

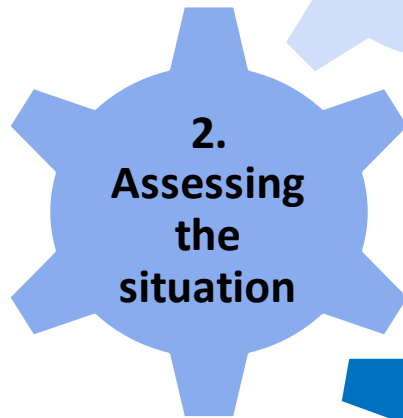


**1. Setting the framework**

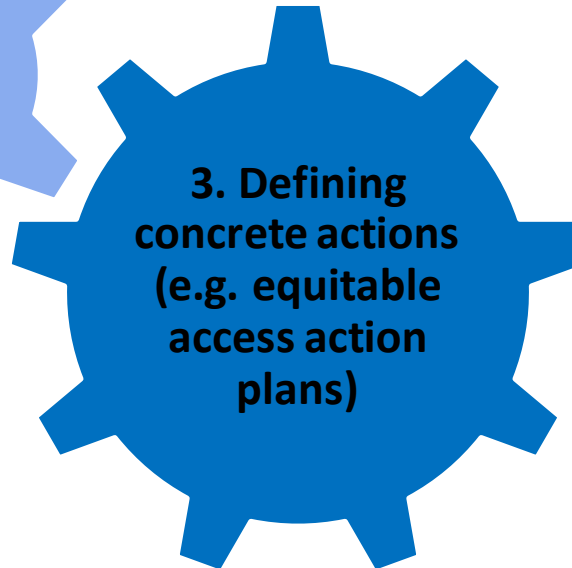


**1. No-one Left behind**

Understand and un-pack the concept of equity



**2. Assessing the situation**



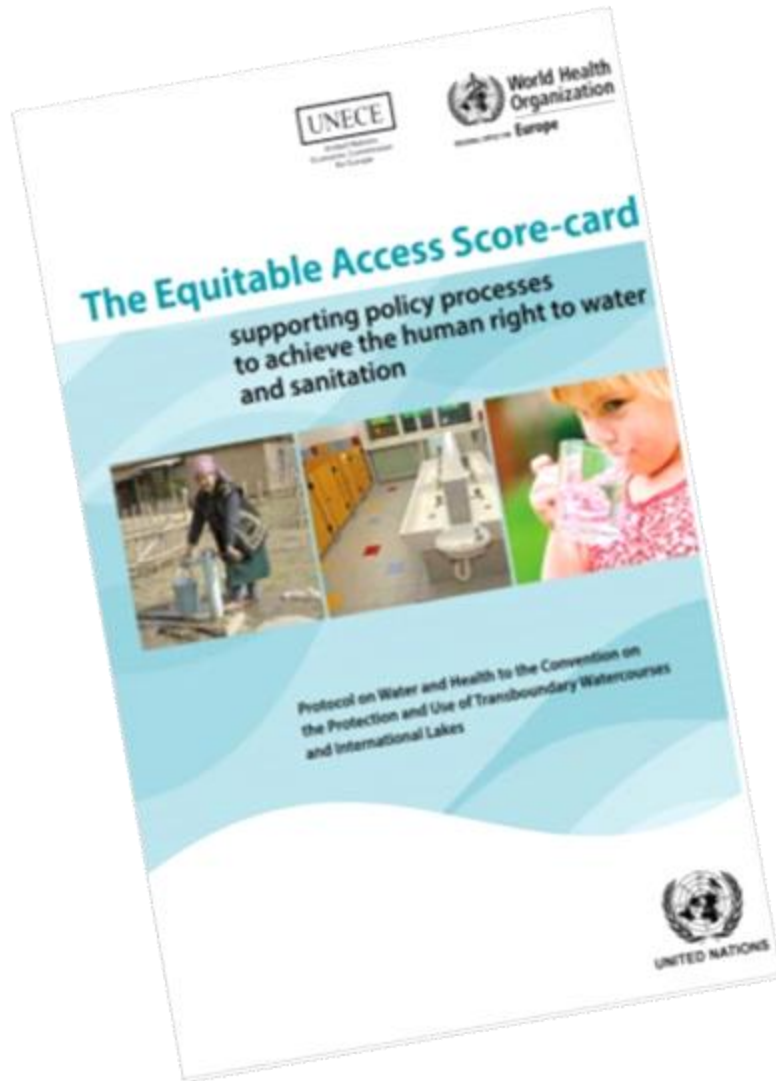
**3. Defining concrete actions (e.g. equitable access action plans)**






**3. Guidance Note on equitable access action plans**

Define action

# Equitable Access Score-card: what for?



- Self evaluation tool to:
  - Establish a baseline and collect information
  - Prompt discussions and engagement (multi-stakeholder process)
  - Track progress
- Application in each country varies depending on
  -  The assessment scale (national, regional, city-level)
  -  The stakeholders involved (government, civil society..)
  -  The data available

# How does the Score-card work in practice?

- Four areas of action explored through qualitative questions

SECTION	AREA OF ACTION
Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	1.1 Strategic framework for achieving equitable access
	1.2 Sector financial policies
	1.3 Rights and duties of users and right-holders
Reducing geographical disparities	2.1 Public policies to reduce access disparities between geographical areas
	2.2 Public policies to reduce price disparities between geographical areas
	2.3 Geographical allocation of external support
Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all	4.1 Public policies to ensure affordability
	4.2 Tariff measures
	4.3 Social protection measures

SECTION	AREA OF ACTION
Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups	3.1 Public policies to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups
	3.2 Persons with special physical needs
	3.3 Users of health facilities
	3.4 Users of educational facilities
	3.5 Users of retirement homes
	3.6 Prisoners
	3.7 Refugees living in refugee camps and centres
	3.8 Homeless people
	3.9 Travellers and nomadic communities
	3.10 Persons living in housing without water and sanitation
	3.11 Persons without access to safe drinking water and sanitation in their workplaces



## AREA 3.9 TRAVELLERS AND NOMADIC COMMUNITIES

**Rationale.** A number of people lack access to water and sanitation services not because their locality is not served or because they cannot afford them, but because they have no fixed dwelling to be connected to the water and sanitation networks. They include travellers and nomadic communities. Travellers and nomadic communities have to rely on public facilities. (The challenge of settlements of ethnic minorities is considered under area 3.10).

	YES	TO A LARGE EXTENT	TO A LIMITED EXTENT	NO
<b>3.9.1 There is data on levels of access to safe drinking water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities</b>				

**Score justification:** (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)

**Means of verification used:** (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)

**Reliability of the response:** (high, medium, or low)

**3.9.2 There is a public policy to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities**

**Score justification:** (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)

**Means of verification used:** (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)

**Reliability of the response:** (high, medium, or low)

**3.9.3 There is specific public funding to support access to water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities**

**Score justification:** (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)

**Means of verification used:** (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)

**Reliability of the response:** (high, medium, or low)

**Please calculate the score for Area 3.9**

Add the points obtained (Yes = 3, To a large extent = 2, To a limited extent = 1, No = 0) .....

Divide the number of total points by 3 .....

**Please estimate the average reliability of the responses for this area** (please mark one option)

High ..... Medium ..... Low .....

Qualitative question

Response

- Score justification
- Means of verification
- Reliability of the response

## Overview of results

SECTION	AREA OF ACTION	SCORE	RELIABILITY
Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	1.1 Strategic framework for achieving equitable access		
	1.2 Sector financial policies		
	1.3 Rights and duties of users and right-holders		
Reducing geographical disparities	2.1 Public policies to reduce access disparities between geographical areas		
	2.2 Public policies to reduce price disparities between geographical areas		
	2.3 Geographical allocation of external support		
Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups	3.1 Public policies to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups		
	3.2 Persons with special physical needs		
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Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all	4.1 Public policies to ensure affordability		
	4.2 Tariff measures		
	4.3 Social protection measures		

- Summary sheet helps to identify **priority areas of action**:
  - Where the country/region/city is lagging behind
  - Where the information is particularly unreliable
- Exercise helps to build the case to take **concrete follow-up action**

# Informal settlements and equitable access to water and sanitation

- Many countries across the UNECE region are **unaware** of challenges faced by informal settlements, but Equitable Access Score-card helped in highlighting them
- Even when the situation is known, dwellers of informal settlements are one of the vulnerable and marginalized groups that is **receiving less attention** across countries
- **Public policies are widely lacking** in the UNECE region to support the supply of water and sanitation services to informal settlements or marginalized neighbourhoods. In many cases, this is the root cause of inequities

## Country example – Self-assessment in the Greater Paris urban area (2012-2013)

- Main disparity in access to water and sanitation attributed to slums and informal settlements in Ile-de-France.
- Results showed that no specific public policies are in place to support delivery of water and sanitation services; solutions implemented on an ad hoc basis

# How can this help to strengthen resilience against infectious diseases?

- Protocol tools support national and local authorities in **improving existing equity challenges** in the water and sanitation sectors and in furthering the progressive realization of the **human rights** to safe drinking water and sanitation
- This betters the **capacity of societies to withstand shocks**, which hit the most vulnerable and marginalized the hardest
- **Concrete impacts** were achieved by countries working under the Protocol, including improvement of infrastructure and changes in policy and legislative frameworks
- The self-assessment methodology provides a basis for **informed dialogue** and can help in **mobilizing funding** for equitable access to water and sanitation
- The process improves **intersectoral cooperation** and coordination among stakeholders



# Take home points - Building back better



- Informal settlements face some **underlying challenges** with respect to access to safe drinking water and sanitation
- The COVID-19 pandemic has **exacerbated existing problems** and caused disproportionate impact on dwellers of informal settlements
- The Protocol on Water and Health offers **concrete tools** to improve the situation with equity and to **strengthen resilience** against COVID-19 and other infectious diseases



# Thank you for your attention!

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#)

Information on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol is available [here](#)

Contact the Protocol secretariat at [protocol.water\\_health@un.org](mailto:protocol.water_health@un.org); [euwatsan@who.int](mailto:euwatsan@who.int)

