

Tool 6 – Summary – Self-management – Assessment and Improvement

Self-management of waste refers to situations where waste collection services cannot be provided due to resource constraints, particularly in sparsely populated areas. In such cases, the focus shifts to supporting households in managing their waste independently. This approach emphasises individual solutions, encouraging practices such as waste reduction, reuse, and resource recovery, particularly in organic waste management.

Description

Self-management of waste focuses on empowering households to manage their waste independently. It is most appropriate in areas with very low population density, logistical challenges, or long distances between waste generators, making waste collection coverage impractical, time-consuming, and expensive. As an alternative to waste collection, the goal is to empower communities to handle waste sustainably at an individual level while minimising public health risks and environmental impact.

The assessment of self-management provides an initial overview of current waste management practices, allowing for evaluation of the infrastructure, design, operations, key service planning elements, and governance.

Steps for the assessment and improvement of self-management:

1. Plan and prepare the assessment (1-2 days)

- a. Engage with key stakeholders who can provide information, contribute to the assessment, and support implementation during the assessment and improvement process, as well as beyond. These stakeholders may include current community leaders, service providers, local government representatives, informal waste pickers, planners, camp managers, and WASH promoters. Empowering stakeholders from the outset ensures their ownership of the process, strengthens local capacity, and facilitates a smoother transition when humanitarian actors phase out.
- b. Gather any secondary information on the SWM system in the area of interest.
- c. Prepare yourself and key staff who will conduct the assessment using the proposed additional resources below.

2. Gain an overview of the current self-management practices (1 day)

- a. Use **Tool 6.1 – Overview of Self-management** to gain an overview of the current self-management practices.

3. Evaluate the self-management practices (1-3 days)

- a. Do field observations of the different elements of self-management.
- b. Use **Tool 6.2 – Evaluation and Improvement of Self-management** to evaluate the self-management system: use **Table T 6.2 A** to evaluate the self-management practices. Along with these physical aspects, **Table T 6.2 B** guides you in evaluating the support framework provided by humanitarian actors or stakeholders to assist communities in self-managing their waste independently.
- c. Look at the options for possible improvement using the **Tool 6.2 – Evaluation and Improvement of Self-management**.

4. Analyse and process the evaluation's results (1-2 days)

- a. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing improvement measures with the available resources you have. Use **Tool 8 – Cost Evaluation**.
- b. Prepare a list of the key improvements to implement.

5. Plan for implementation (2-3 days)

- a. Prepare the details of the improvements you have selected and allocate resources.
- b. Plan a timeline for the implementation.
- c. Inform key stakeholders and validate your plan.
- d. Support the set-up of a waste-focused community-led committee.

6. Implement improvements (over weeks with follow-up monitoring and adjustments)

- Train relevant staff and the community members on new practices and measures to be implemented.
- Collect data and monitor the changes made, adjust if necessary.
- Consider redoing an assessment of the self-management in the future to identify further improvement needs.

Time requirements are a rough indication and will depend on the complexity of your system.

Resources

Tool 6.1 – Overview of Self-management

Tool 6.2 – Evaluation and Improvement of Self-management

Tool 8 – Cost Evaluation

The assessment and improvement of self-management connect to the following chapters of the Compendium:

For organics:

- **[T.1 Composting \(pp. 80-81\)](#)**
- **[T.2 Vermicomposting \(pp. 82-83\)](#)**
- **[T.3 Anaerobic Digestion \(pp. 84-85\)](#)**
- **[T.4 Black Soldier Fly \(BSF\) Waste Processing \(pp. 86-87\)](#)**
- **[T.5 Making Fuel From Biomass \(pp. 114-115\)](#)**

For plastics:

- **[T.7 Plastic Upcycling \(pp. 92-93\)](#)**
- **[T.6 Plastic Downcycling \(pp. 94-95\)](#)**

For recyclables:

- **[U.1 Sale of Recyclable Materials \(pp. 102-103\)](#)**

For residual waste

- **[U.8 Controlled Waste Pit \(pp. 116-117\)](#)**

Additional resources

Ewers, L., Gensch, R., Hayman, S., Krähenbühl, M., Kucharski, M., Machado, A., Mertenat, A., Salem, F., Tosi Robinson, D., Ubbiali, S., Zurbrügg, C. (2025): Compendium of Solid Waste Management in Humanitarian Contexts. German WASH Network (GWN), Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag), Global WASH Cluster (GWC), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA). Berlin. Germany. ISBN: 978-3-906484-81-5. **[PDF](#)**

Gensch, R., Ferron, S., Sandison, P., Bindel, A., Coerver, A., Cottafavi, L., Deniel, K., Ewers, L., Friedrich, M., Harter, M., Hoffmann, O., Lloyd, A., Machado, A., Shrinivasan, S., Vallis, S. (2022): Compendium of Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies. German WASH Network (GWN), Global WASH Cluster (GWC), Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Berlin. Germany. **[PDF](#)**. Especially: **[Social and Behaviour Change](#)**