

GLOBAL PROGRESS REPORT ON WASH IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Fundamentals first





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Global progress report on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: fundamentals first

ISBN 978-92-4-001754-2 (electronic version) ISBN 978-92-4-001755-9 (print version)

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Suggested citation. Global progress report on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: fundamentals first. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at http://apps.who.int/iris.

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Edit and design by Inis Communication.

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Foreword

This global progress report on water, sanitation, hygiene, waste management and cleaning (WASH) in health care facilities comes at an unprecedented moment, when coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is exposing key vulnerabilities in health systems, such as inadequate infection prevention and control. WASH services in health care facilities, so often taken for granted - or as this report highlights, outright neglected - are needed more than ever to protect vulnerable health workers and patients.

The report identifies major global gaps in WASH services: one third of health care facilities do not have what is needed to clean hands where care is provided; one in four facilities lack basic water services, and one in 10 have no sanitation services. This means that 1.8 billion people use facilities that lack basic water services and 800 million use facilities with no toilets. Across the world's 47 least-developed countries, the problem is even greater: half of health care facilities lack basic water services. Furthermore, the extent of the problem remains hidden because major gaps in data persist, especially on environmental cleaning.

This report also describes global responses. In response to the 2019 World Health Assembly resolution on WASH in health care facilities, data from 47 countries indicates that more than 70% have conducted related situation analyses, 86% have updated and are implementing standards and 60% are working to incrementally improve infrastructure and operation and maintenance of WASH services. Case studies from 30 countries demonstrate that progress is being propelled by strong national leadership and coordination, use of data to direct resources and action, and the mutual benefits of empowering health workers and communities to develop solutions together.

Despite reported progress, critical gaps remain. Only one third of countries responding to the World Health Assembly resolution have developed costed roadmaps for action, and just over 10% have integrated WASH indicators into regular national health system monitoring.

This report was launched to coincide with the 2020 International Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day,

with the theme *Protect Everyone*. Investments in WASH must be an essential part of UHC for every country. Furthermore, investing in WASH and energy services in health care facilities is one of the core prescriptions for a healthy, green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the new data in this report, we offer four recommendations to all countries and partners, particularly health and community leaders:

- Implement costed national roadmaps with appropriate financing;
- Monitor and regularly review progress in improving WASH services, practices and the enabling environment;
- Develop capacities of health workforce to sustain WASH services and promote and practice good hygiene; and
- Integrate WASH into regular health sector planning, budgeting, and programming, including COVID-19 response and recovery efforts to deliver quality services.

Implementing these recommendations requires committed and courageous leaders, communities and partners. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) remain steadfast in supporting these efforts and we call on all countries, partners and individuals to intensify their commitment and related investments.

The world can no longer afford to overlook the fundamentals.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization

Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of collaboration between a large number of contributors, reviewers and editors. The development of the report was led by the WHO and UNICEF secretariat: Arabella Hayter, Claire Kilpatrick, Maggie Montgomery and Julie Storr (WHO) and Irene Amongin, Silvia Gaya and Emilia Raila (UNICEF), under the overall direction and guidance of Bruce Gordon and Shamsuzzoha Syed (WHO) and Kelly Ann Naylor (UNICEF).

The authors are grateful to the following organizations and individuals for significant contributions to specific chapters:

Chapter 3: The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme team: Robert Bain; Christie Chatterley; Rick Johnston; Francesco Mitis; Tom Slaymaker.

Chapter 4: Members of the WHO Taskforce on Quality and those who contributed to the health updates: Lydia Abebe; Benedetta Allegranzi; Alessandro Cassini; Breeda Hickey; Ivan Ivanov; Melissa Kleine Bingham; Laura Nic Lochlain; Blerta Maliqi; Nana Mensah Abrampah; Moise Muzigaba; Margot Nauleau; Stephen Nurse Findlay; Pravarsha Prakash; Tin Tin Stint; Anthony Twyman; Salvatore Vinci; Elena Villalobos Prats; Qingxia Zhong.

Chapter 5: WaterAid, specifically Helen Hamilton, Alison Macintyre and Kyla Smith.

Chapter 6: World Bank, led by Clare Chase; Global Water 2020, specifically Lindsay Denny and Hank Habicht; WaterAid, specifically Fauzia Aliuand, Helen Hamilton, Ellen Greggio, Kyla Smith, George Yorke; Michael Chaitkin and Samantha McCormick led the costing analysis.

The authors also wish to thank the many individuals who contributed content, helped collate country stories and progress updates and reviewed the draft of the document:

Michelle Adler; Shihab Uddin Ahamad; Laura Alcorn; Fauzia Alia; Greg Allgood; Onyema Ajuebor; Suraya Amir Husin; Sandrine Andriantsimietry; Jorge Alvarez-Sala; Frederik Asplund; Naing Aung; A S Nurullah Awal; Shahid Mahbub Awan; Aboubacar Ballo; Hamed Bakir; Kolawole Banwo; Joseph Banzi; Amy Boore; Sory Bouare; John Brogan; Erica Burton; Pierre Carnevale; Sae-Rom Chae; Kangwa Chikuntele; Pamela Chisanga; Chris Cormency; Tim Davis; Paul Deverill; Indah Deviyanti; Mamadou Diarafa Diallo; Pie Djivo; Quincy T. D'Goll; Therese Dooley; Lobzang Dorji; Edwin Isotu Edeh; Shinee Enkhtsetseg; Ukeme Essien; Sorsa Faltamo Jama; Jose Gesi; Nkwan Jacob Gobte; Samuel Godfrey; Faustina Gomez; Giorgia Gon; Fiona Gore; Wendy Graham; Ellen Greggio; Valentina Grossi; Sunny Guidotti; Innocent Habimana; Moussa Ag Hamma; Hafizah binti Hasan; Carolyn Herzig; Breeda Hickey; Alexander von Hildebrand; Mitsuaki Hirai; Mark Hoeke; Erin Hylton; Esmaeil Ibrahim; Viengsompasong Inthavong; Pam Iyer; Andrea Jones; Dragana Jovanovic; Samuel Kaba; Kristy Kade; Gloria Kafura; Safo Kalandorov; Laxman Kharal; Min Ko Ko; Antoine Kocher; Marcelo Korc; Waltaji Kutane Terfa; Christopher Lee; Khankrika Lim; Matthew Lozier; Oyuntogos Lkhasuren; Alison Macintyre; Peter Georg L Maes; Bonifacio Magtibay; Shamsul Mahmud; Pete de Marco; Abdoulaye Mariama Baïssa; Magdalene Matthews Ofori-kuma; Jolly Ann Maulit; Kaveri Mayra; Guy Mbayo; Evelyn Mere; Didier Monteiro; Annie Msosa; Farzona Mukhitdinova; Sofia Murad; Diriisa Musisi; Mubiana Muyangwa; Jonas Naissem; Alban Nouvellon; Victor Nyamandi; Michele Paba; Molly Patrick; Mohanlal Peiris; Genandrialine Peralta; Malala Ranarison; Monica Ramos; Hussain Rasheed; Hantanirina Ravaosendrasoa; Nick Rice Chudeau; Bud Rock; Cipriano do Rosario Pacheco; Mike Paddock; Ute Pieper; Monica Ramos; Bayiha Ruben; Gustavo Saltiel; Channa Sam Ol; Ramon San Pascual; Stephen Sara; Aminatta Sarr; Deepak Saxena; Oliver Schmoll; Patricia Segurado; Jane Sembuche; Antoinette Shor-Anyawoe; Charles Siachema; Aline Simen Kapeu; Shivanarain Singh; Susanna Smets; Ruth Stringer; David Sutherland; Tsedey Tamir; Brenda Tembo; Lekiley Temeh; Nghia Ton; Alpha Nouhoum Traore; Julie Truelove; Marta Vargha; Johannah (Yoyo) Wegerdt; Susan Wilburn; Lee (Pamela) Yew Fong; Osman Yiha; George Yorke.

WHO and UNICEF gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by:

Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD); Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; General Electric (GE) Foundation; Global Environment Facility/United Nations Development Programme; Netherlands Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS); Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and Wallace Genetic Foundation/Water 2020.

The report was edited and designed by Inis Communication.

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