

Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on patient safety: water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities,¹

RECOMMENDS to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Seventy-second World Health Assembly,

Recalling the Declaration of Astana from the Global Conference on Primary Health Care (Astana, Kazakhstan, 25 and 26 October 2018) which envisions strengthening primary health care (PHC) as the most inclusive, effective and efficient approach to enhance people's physical and mental health, as well as social well-being, and that PHC is a cornerstone of a sustainable health system for effective universal health coverage (UHC) and health-related Sustainable Development Goals;

Recalling also resolution WHA64.24 (2011) on drinking water, sanitation and health, which emphasizes the tenets of PHC as per the Declaration of Alma-Ata on Primary Health Care and other resolutions recalled therein (WHA35.17 (1982), WHA39.20 (1986), WHA42.25 (1989), WHA44.28 (1991), WHA45.31 (1992), WHA51.28 (1998) and WHA63.23 (2010)) and resolution WHA70.7 (2017) which stressed the role of improving safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health care waste management and hygiene practices in primary health care;

Recalling further United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/292 on the human right to water and sanitation of July 2010 and resolution 72/178 of December 2017 and the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 39/8 of September 2018, on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation;

Noting that without sufficient and safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities, countries will not achieve the targets set out in Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote health and well-being for all at all ages) and Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), including reducing maternal and newborn mortality and achieving effective universal health coverage, and also in Sustainable Development Goals 1, 7, 11 and 13;

Noting also that the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services is fundamental for patient safety and has been shown to reduce the risk of infection for patients,

¹ Document EB144/30.

caregivers, health workers and surrounding communities, and noting that progress towards WASH in health care facilities would also allow for effective and timely prevention of, and care for, cholera along with diarrhoeal and other diseases, as recognized in resolution WHA71.4 (2018) on cholera prevention and control;

Recalling WHA68.7 (2015) on the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance, which underscores the critical importance of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in community and health care settings for better hygiene and infection prevention measures to limit the development and spread of antimicrobial-resistant infections and to limit the inappropriate use of antimicrobial medicines, ensuring good stewardship;

Noting the findings of the joint WHO and UNICEF report, *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: status in low- and middle-income countries and way forward*,¹ which revealed that close to 40% of all health care facilities globally lack access to even rudimentary water supplies, 19% lack sanitation and 35% do not have water and soap for handwashing,² underscoring the implications of not having these basics in these places, including the spread of infections in places that are supposed to promote health and basic hygiene for disease prevention; and stressing the implications for the dignity of patients and other users who seek health care services, particularly women in labour and their newborn babies;

Recalling the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General making a global call for action for water, sanitation and hygiene in all health care facilities;

Noting that the Director-General's report to the Seventy-first World Health Assembly on health, environment and climate change³ has identified global driving forces, including population growth, urbanization and climate change, which are expected to significantly affect the availability and quality of, and access to, water and sanitation services and freshwater resources, and the urgent need for addressing the links between climate, energy, safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health;

1. URGES Member States:⁴

- (1) to conduct comprehensive assessments according to the national context and, where appropriate, to quantify: the availability and quality of, and needs for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities; and infection prevention and control (IPC)

¹ WHO and UNICEF. *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: status in low- and middle-income countries and way forward*. World Health Organization: Geneva; 2015.

² WHO and UNICEF will release Sustainable Development Goal baseline figures for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities in March/April 2019. These new figures will supersede the figures currently stated in the resolution.

³ Document A71/11.

⁴ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

status, using existing regional and global protocols or tools^{1,2} and in collaboration with the global effort to improve WASH in health care facilities;³

(2) to develop and implement a road map according to national context so that every health care facility in every setting has, commensurate with its needs: safely managed and reliable water supplies; sufficient, safely managed and accessible toilets or latrines for patients, caregivers and staff of all sexes, ages and abilities; appropriate core components of infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes, including good hand hygiene infrastructure and practices; routine, effective cleaning; safe waste management systems, including for excreta and medical waste disposal; and, whenever possible, sustainable and clean energy;

(3) to establish and implement, according to national context, minimum standards for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) in all health care settings and build WASH and IPC standards into accreditation and regulation systems; and establish accountability mechanisms to reinforce standards and practice;

(4) to set targets within health policies and integrate indicators for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC)⁴ into national monitoring mechanisms to establish baselines, track progress and track health system performance on a regular basis;

(5) to integrate safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) into health programming, including into nutrition and maternal, child and newborn health within the context of safe, quality and integrated people-centred health services, effective universal health coverage, infection prevention and control (IPC) and antimicrobial resistance;

(6) to identify and address inequities and interruptions in the availability of adequate safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in health facilities, especially in facilities that provide maternity services and in primary health care facilities;

(7) to align their strategies and approaches with the global effort for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities⁵ and contribute to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote health and

¹ WHO and UNICEF. Water and sanitation health facility improvement tool (WASH-FIT). Geneva: World Health Organization/UNICEF; 2018 (https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/water-and-sanitation-for-health-facility-improvement-tool/en/, accessed 28 January 2019).

² National infection prevention and control assessment tool (IPCAT2) and WHO Infection Prevention and Control Assessment Framework (IPCAF) (<https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/tools/core-components/en/>, accessed 28 January 2019).

³ WHO and UNICEF are co-coordinating the global efforts to improve safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities. Action is focused on a number of key areas, including national assessments. More information can be found on the knowledge portal: www.washinhc.org.

⁴ WHO and UNICEF. Core questions and indicators for monitoring WASH in health care facilities in the Sustainable Development Goals (https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/core-questions-and-indicators-for-monitoring-wash/en/, accessed 28 January 2019).

⁵ WHO/UNICEF global activities on WASH in health care facilities. (https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/facilities/en/, accessed 28 January 2019).

well-being for all at all ages) and Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all);

(8) to have procedures and funding in place to operate and maintain safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) services in health facilities, and to make continuous upgrades and improvements based on needs so that infrastructure continues to operate and resources are made available to help facilities access other sources of safe water in the event of failures in the normal water supply, so that environmental and other impacts are minimized and in order to maintain hygiene practices;

(9) to educate and raise awareness, in line with regional agreements, on water, sanitation and hygiene, with a particular focus on maternity, hospital facilities, and settings used by mothers and children; and to conduct ongoing education campaigns on the risks of poor sanitation, including open defecation, to discourage this practice, and encourage community support for use of toilets and safe management of faecal waste by health workers;

(10) to establish strong multisectoral coordination mechanisms with the active involvement of all relevant ministries, particularly those responsible for health, finance, water, and energy; to align and strengthen collaborative efforts and ensure adequate financing to support the delivery of all aspects of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) across the health system; and to invest in a sufficient and well-trained health workforce, including health care workers, cleaners and engineers to manage WASH services, provide ongoing maintenance and operations and perform appropriate WASH and IPC practices, including strong pre-service and ongoing in-service education and training programmes for all levels of staff;

(11) to promote a safe and secure working environment for every health worker, including working aids and tools, safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and cleaning and hygiene supplies, for efficient and safe service delivery;

2. INVITES international, regional and local partners:

(1) to raise the profile of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities, in health strategies and in flexible funding mechanisms, and thereby direct efforts towards strengthening health systems as a whole, rather than focusing on vertical or siloed programming approaches;

(2) to support government efforts to empower communities to participate in the decision-making concerning the provision of better and more equitable safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in health facilities, including their reporting to authorities about insufficient or inadequate WASH services;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to continue providing global leadership and the development of technical guidance to achieve the targets set out in this resolution;

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- (2) to report on the global status of access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities as part of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), including through the Joint Monitoring Programme, and to include WASH and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities within effective universal health coverage, primary health care and efforts to monitor the quality of care;
 - (3) to catalyse the mobilization of domestic and external resources from the public and private sectors, and to support the development of national business cases for investment in safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities;
 - (4) to continue to raise the profile of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities within WHO and at high-level political forums, and to work with other United Nations agencies to respond to the United Nations Secretary General's call to action in a coordinated manner;
 - (5) to work with Member States and partners to review, update and implement the global action plan and support Member States in the development of national road maps and targets for safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities;
 - (6) to work with partners to adapt existing and, if necessary, develop new reporting mechanisms to capture and monitor progress on the coordination, implementation, financing, access, quality and governance of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities, according to established indicator reporting methodology for Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all);¹
 - (7) to report on progress in the implementation of the present resolution to the Health Assembly in 2021 and 2023, through the Executive Board;
 - (8) to support coordination and implementation of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and basic infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in health care facilities and triage centres in times of crisis and humanitarian emergencies through the Health and WASH clusters, leveraging partnerships to prevent disease outbreaks in these contexts.

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EB144/SR/13

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¹ Includes protocols, methods and reporting conducted by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme and the WHO-led UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Water.