

The “WASH in health care facilities: global baseline report 2019” of the WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) was released on 3 April 2019. It is the first comprehensive global assessment and management of WASH in health care facilities, complemented by another report that outlines practical actions countries can take to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: “ Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: practical steps to achieve universal access to quality care”.

This report represents a compilation and analysis of existing monitoring data on the status of WASH services in facilities that countries have already collected and reviewed. It reveals that globally 12% of health care facilities had no water services and 21% had no sanitation services, and that many health centres lack basic facilities for hand hygiene and safe segregation and disposal of health care waste.

With reference to the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the report includes data entries on only 10 countries. However, the quality of data available varies widely from almost complete in one country to scarce as in the other nine countries of the Region. This highlights the dire need for national health authorities in Member States to undertake comprehensive national assessments of WASH services in health care facilities in the Region as an integral part of a situational analysis. Data generated through the comprehensive assessment will bridge the knowledge gap, providing the foundation for identifying needs, developing national standards, delineating improvement plans and mobilizing action for enhancing the WASH services in regional facilities.

The World Health Assembly 2019 is also expected to endorse a Resolution recommended by the WHO 144th Session of the Executive Board on Water Sanitation and Hygiene in Healthcare Facilities. The expected resolution will outline the health agenda for improving the situation of WASH in health care facilities.

It will be calling for health authorities in Member States to:

- 1) conduct national assessments of availability and quality of WASH services in health care facilities;

2) establish standards and implement a road map so that every HCF 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;

3) set pertinent targets within health policies;

4) integrate indicators for WASH into national monitoring mechanisms to establish baselines tracking system on a regular basis. Ministries of health are encouraged to assume ownership, mobilize necessary financing for fruitful action to ensure and sustain WASH services in all health care facilities.

Related links

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