



Outcomes of National Workshop on WASH in Health Care Facilities (WinHCF) in Bangladesh: Call for Joint Action

The 1st national workshop on WASH in Health Care Facilities (WinHCF) in Bangladesh was held in Dhaka on the 13th of December, 2017.

The Workshop was organized by UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, Terres des Hommes (TDH), WaterAid, Care and Plan International Workshop Dhaka under the auspices of the Directorate General Health Services of The Ministry of Health Family Welfare in collaboration with Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and the Department of Public Health Engineering. The National workshop was a follow up action from the WHO/UNICEF Global learning event held in Nepal in March 2018.

The objective of the National workshop was to review the status of WASH in Health Care facilities in Bangladesh in line with the Global Action plan and make recommendations.

About 115 WASH and Health stakeholders from government, development partners, international and national NGOs attended the workshop. These policy makers and technocrats deliberated on evidence from studies, assessments and field experience from global and national perspectives during sessions in plenary and group work.

The stakeholders noted that government is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development goals for health and WASH as captured in various policy documents. The participants however noted that there are challenges which need to be addressed by Joint Action by Health and WASH sectors. The challenges noted include:

- Wide variation in status of WinHCF between the different levels of health care facilities.
- Only 25% of HCF have all six essential components of WASH;
- Poor WASH fuels Anti Microbial Resistance (AMR) by (a) increasing incidence of antibiotic usage and (b) Hospital acquired infections;
- Poor Hygiene practices results in high rates of sepsis and contributes to the growing problem of patient dissatisfaction and distrust of the health care facilities;
- Poor WASH contributes to the vicious cycle of spread of infections from hospitals/health care facilities to communities and children under 5 who are also very vulnerable;
- Safety of water and sanitation must be ensured not only for drinking, but for surgery, delivery etc.;
- Safe storage and disposal of health care waste is a challenge;
- There are different levels of access to quality WASH by patients, health care workers and care givers;

The stakeholders noted that the absence of a specific strategy and action plan on WASH in HCF is a gap that must be addressed immediately and made recommendations which will form the framework for the National Action Plan on WinHCF for Bangladesh.

1. **Built Consensus** that WASH in HCF is a precondition for improving quality of care in MNCH, infection prevention and control, prevention of anti-microbial resistance;
2. **Noted** that safe water and sanitation is necessary for good performance and high morale of staff and uptake of health services for achieving the SDGs for health and WASH;
3. **Recognized** that the Government of Bangladesh has made commendable and significant progress in the reduction of maternal and child mortality, improved access to water and reduction of open defecation;
4. **Stressed** that challenges remain in reducing the neonatal mortality and access to safe and sustainable water, sanitation, hygiene and health care waste management.
5. **Urged** for an acceleration of the development of a national WASH in HCF Strategy and joint action plan by the WASH and Health sectors and relevant partners to facilitate a comprehensive approach;
6. **Recognized** that there are disparities between coverage and quality and different levels of health facilities and those in hard to reach areas;

7. **Stressed** the need to build on existing opportunities such as government commitments, health care standards, protocols by developing incentives and relevant indicators.
8. **Emphasized** the importance of supply chain management to ensure functionality and compliance e.g the availability of soap
9. **Recognized** the importance of adequate funding for implementing , operating and maintaining WASH in HCF especially in remote and hard to reach areas
10. **Review** and integrate WASH in HCF in existing WASH and Health Sectors policies, standards and guidelines to facilitate the allocation of adequate funding and human resources by health sector for implementation, operation and maintenance at all levels;
11. **Strengthen** advocacy to policy makers within relevant ministries and parliament for prioritization of WASH in HCF;
12. **Coordination and collaboration** with relevant authorities and line ministries to address challenges external to health sector;
13. **Establish** a Steering Committee on WASH in HCF to support the development of mechanisms to facilitate compliance with agreed standards & implementation of outcomes of the workshop
14. **Strengthen** partnerships, accountability and decentralization mechanisms between communities, sub-national and national government authorities;
15. **Develop** National Strategy and Action plan for WASH in HCF in Bangladesh incorporating RMNCH/QI Standards and inclusiveness,
16. **Standards** and indicators for Quality WASH: Review standards and indicators to ensure that safe sanitation, safe water in terms of arsenic and microbial contamination is provided not just for drinking, but for surgery, child birth and use at home by rural and urban dwellers and even in time humanitarian crisis.
17. Establish intersectoral mechanisms to change social norms related to core WASH practices;
18. **Include** WASH in HCF core indicators for SDGs (baseline and progress) in DHIS2 and relevant WASH and Health Surveys and include WASH in HCF in routine monitoring and surveillance system;
19. **Commission** operational research to generate context specific evidence on the impact of WinHCF on MNCH, Quality improvement, Antimicrobial resistance etc.

There was high level commitment from policy makers such as the Minister of Health, and the Secretary, Ministry of Health to take the commitments forward. The Director General, Directorate General Health Services reiterated Government's support and urged stakeholders to partner with government for urgent action. The Country Representative of UNICEF Bangladesh assured participants of Development partners' support. A follow up meeting has been held on the 4th of February under the auspices of the Line Director, Community Based Health Care and hosted by UNICEF to take the actions forward.