

May 10, 2019

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1202 Geneva

Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus:

Some of the most effective tools we have for preventing disease are also some of the most simple: clean water, adequate sanitation, and good hygiene practices. Yet despite this well-known truth, too many health facilities in low- and middle-income countries do not meet basic standards when it comes to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), leaving health workers and patients at risk.

In April, the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme released the first-ever global estimates for WASH in health care facilities. They found that one in four health care facilities globally do not have clean water on site, one in five have no sanitation services, and one in six have no handwashing facilities. The numbers get even worse if you look only at health facilities in less-developed countries: 45% of health care facilities in the least-developed countries have no clean water on site. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 23% of facilities have decent toilets.

Poor WASH contributes to the incidence and spread of infections. An estimated 15% of patients develop one or more infections during a hospital stay, and sepsis causes approximately 6 million deaths every year. New mothers and newborns are especially vulnerable. More than 1 million deaths each year are associated with unclean births, and babies born in hospitals in low- and middle-income countries are up to 20 times more likely to develop neonatal sepsis than hospital-born babies in high-income countries.

Recurrent infections due to poor WASH also result in increased prophylactic use of antibiotics, contributing to antimicrobial resistance. Beyond the implications for disease transmission, unsafe and unhygienic conditions in health care facilities negatively impact health worker attendance, morale, retention, and safety.

Last year, the UN Secretary General issued a global call to action to improve WASH in all health care facilities, and WHO and UNICEF are leading a coordinated response and action plan. We applaud their leadership and efforts to date, but additional country support, prioritization, and commitment is needed to achieve change at the scale necessary for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving Universal Health Coverage. While incremental progress has been made, ongoing challenges include poor coordination between the WASH and health sectors, a lack of political will and financing, and inadequate infrastructure and health worker training and practices at the facility level.

We call on Member States and WHO to:

- Support and co-sponsor the proposed resolution on WASH in health care facilities at WHA 72.
- Ensure the resolution and country-level progress address inequalities in WASH services, targeting areas where WASH needs are greatest.
- Ensure that all action prioritizes the specific needs of those most at risk due to inadequate WASH services, including pregnant women, newborns, people with disabilities, the seriously ill, and marginalized populations.
- Develop standards and monitoring mechanisms for advanced levels of WASH in health care facilities that ensure infection prevention and control, and reduce the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

Achieving universal access to WASH in health care facilities through sustained leadership, cross-sector action, and health systems strengthening is a winnable battle. We, the undersigned, stand ready to contribute to the global response to the UN Secretary General's Global Call to Action and support country-led action to ensure basic WASH services in health care facilities for all.

Organizations

1. 4africa
2. Action Against Hunger
3. ADRA International
4. Afghanistan National Public Health Association
5. Africa Christian Health Associations Platform
6. Alliance for Surgery and Anesthesia Presence (ASAP)
7. American Academy of Pediatrics
8. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
9. arche noVa Initiative for People in Need
10. Assist International
11. Association Evangelique pour la Sante au Tchad
12. Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
13. BORDA (Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association)
14. Boston Consulting Group
15. Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
16. Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services
17. CARE
18. Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB)
19. Center for Global Safe Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene at Emory University
20. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
21. Clean the World Foundation
22. Community of Baptist Churches of Eastern Congo/ Department of Health
23. CORE Group
24. Daughters of Charity International Project Services
25. DRI
26. El Porvenir
27. Emory University Ethiopia Amhara Regional Office
28. Engineers Without Borders USA
29. Faiths for Safe Water
30. Freshwater Project International
31. Frontline Health Workers Coalition
32. German Medical Aid Organisation action medeor e.V.
33. Global Citizen
34. Global Communities
35. Global Handwashing Partnership
36. Global Health Council
37. Global Water 2020
38. Green Path Nepal
39. Haiti Konbat Maladi
40. Health Rights Advocacy Forum (HERAF)
41. HealthRight International
42. IATSIC
43. International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (The IAPMO Group)

44. International Medical Corps
45. International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation
46. IntraHealth International
47. IRC
48. Kagando Hospital
49. Kumba Baptist Health Centre
50. Living Water International
51. Loma Linda University
52. Management Sciences for Health (MSH)
53. Manila Water Foundation
54. Millennium Water Alliance
55. MiVAC Trust
56. MSR
57. NCM
58. NGO Forum for Public Health
59. Partners in Health
60. PATH
61. Rakod Foundation
62. Rural Health Advocacy Project
63. Save the Children
64. Smile Train
65. Splash International
66. SPOON
67. Sustainable Mission Aid (SMAid)
68. Tanzania WASH and IPC Network (TWIN)
69. Tanzania Water and Sanitation Network (TAWASANET)
70. Terre des hommes
71. The Hunger Project
72. The Soapbox Collaborative
73. The Wellbeing Foundation Africa
74. Touch Foundation
75. Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau
76. Uganda Catholic Secretariat - UCMB
77. Water & Environment International, LLC
78. Water For People
79. Water.org
80. Water4, Inc.
81. WaterAid
82. WECF
83. Wellbeing Foundation Africa
84. White Ribbon Alliance
85. Wish for WASH, LLC
86. World Evangelical Alliance
87. World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA)
88. World Hope International
89. World Relief Deutschland e.V.
90. World Vision Southern Africa Region
91. World Vision U.S.
92. Zanmi Lasante, sister organization to Partners in Health Haiti
93. Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals (ZACH)

Individuals

1. Moustafa Abdelnasser, Prof. of Microbiology & Infection Control, Faculty of Medicine, Al-Azhar University
2. Mr. Issah Abdul-Nasir, NHIA
3. Upama Adhikari, WaterAid Nepal
4. Sara Ahrari, Programme Manager, Simavi
5. Lamesgin Alamineh, Emory University/Ethiopia
6. Dr. OLufemi AlukoObafemi, Awolowo University
7. Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ansari, Coordinator, Child health and Social education (ChaSe) Society Pakistan
8. Dr. Ibrahim Banaru, Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital Zaria, Nigeria
9. Sanjay Banka
10. Daniel Bena, Founder and CEO, Dan Bena, LLC
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18. Patrick Diller, Program Manager, MSR
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20. Alexandra Geiser
21. Mr. Molla Godif, Federal Ministry of Health, Ethiopia
22. Donna Gullette, Associate Dean for Practice, Phd, APR, AGACNP-BC, FAANP
23. Mr. Ahasan Habib, NGO Forum for Public Health
24. Danielle Heiberg, Global Health Council
25. Benito D Isaac, Research Coordinator, Zanmi Lasante
26. Mujuni Kitimbo Jimmy, WASH and Infrastructure Advisor, Amref Health Africa Uganda
27. Pachillu Kalpana, Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar
28. Rosanna Keam, WASH Sector Lead, World Vision Afghanistan
29. Emily Keyes, Senior Research Associate, RMNCH, FHI 360
30. Dr. Raz Mohammad Khan, Ministry of Public Health, Afghanistan
31. Ming-Nan Lin, Vice-superintendent, Buddhist Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, Taiwan
32. Monicah Luwedde, Quality and Safety Advisor, Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau
33. Hamisi Masanja Malebo, Professor, National Commission for UNESCO of the United Republic of Tanzania
34. Mr. Mannan, NGO Forum for Public Health
35. Dr. Arti Maria, Professor Doctor, RML Hospital
36. Greg McCarthy
37. James MdGill, WaSH Coordinator, Presbyterian Church, USA
38. Dr. Richard Mugambe, Makerere University School of Public Health
39. Tedla Mulatu, Ethiopia Program Director, Millennium Water Alliance
40. Luyiga Faridah Mwanje, Regional Communication Advisor, White Ribbon Alliance
41. Mrs. Barbara Hamoonga Ndhlovu, WaterAid Zambia
42. Djekadoum Ndilta, Doctor, Hopital Evangelique de Koyom
43. Robert Mussa Njee, Research Scientist - Public Health, National Institute for Medical Research, Tanzania
44. Bismark Norgbe, Senior Program Manager, International Program Group-WASH, World Vision USA

45. Yungseh Peter Nshiom, Chief of Centre, Kumba Baptist Health Centre
46. Josephine Okine, Nurse Manager, Winneba Municipal Hospital (Ghana Health Service)
47. John Oldfield, Principal, Global Water 2020
48. Michaela Oldfield
49. Sam Orach, Executive Director, Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau
50. Zoe Pacciani, Senior Programs Advisor, Freshwater Project International
51. Loyce Pace, President and Executive Director, Global Health Council
52. Michael Paddock, PE, PS, Chief Engineer, Engineers Without Borders USA
53. Dori Pap
54. Lesley Pories, Senior Sector Analyst, Water.org
55. Sarina Prabasi, CEO, WaterAid America
56. Hope Randall, Communications Officer, PATH
57. Marcille Reed
58. Kongnyu Emmanuel Ringnyu, IPC/Wash Focal Point, Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services
59. Katharine Robb, Doctoral Student, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
60. Yakob Seman, Director General, Ministry of Health Ethiopia
61. Chris Seremet, Consultant
62. Jessica Spruill
63. Erin Stieber, Senior Vice President, Programs, Smile Train
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65. Josue Tchimou, Executive Director, Sustainable Mission Aid (SMAid)
66. Terrence Thompson, Retiree, WHO
67. Mahamane Toure, Program Officer, WaterAid Mali
68. Fousseny Traore, Advocacy and Policy Manager, WaterAid Mali
69. Victoria Trinies
70. Claire Wang, International WASH Sustainability Program Manager, Desert Research Institute
71. Martin Watsisi, Regional WASH Advisor, IRC International Water & Sanitation Centre
72. Steve Werner, Principal, Werner Consulting
73. Habib Yakubu, Program Coordinator, Emory University
74. George Yorke, Head of Policy, Advocacy Campaigns, WaterAid Ghana
75. Sanchika, Program Officer, Jhpiego
76. Mujtaba, M&E Coordinator, WVA
77. Johnson, WASH Technical Advisor, Food for the Hungry Kenya