**WASH IN HEALTHCARE: A NEW GLOBAL HEALTH MOVEMENT (CORE MESSAGING)**

*"We must work to prevent the spread of disease. Improved water, sanitation and hygiene in health facilities is critical to this effort.”*  
**- UN Secretary-General António Guterres on World Water Day 2018**

*"If you can't do the basics forget the rest. Prevention, prevention, prevention."*   
**- Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, **Director-General**, **World Health Organization**

*"A healthcare facility without WASH is not a healthcare facility."*  
**- Dr. Maria Neira, Director of Public Health and Environment, World Health Organization**

**CORE MESSAGE: A global health movement has taken root.**

Just 3 years ago, the appalling conditions inside hospitals and health clinics around the world, due to the lack of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), was virtually ignored. [50% of healthcare facilities in Least Developed Countries](https://www.washinhcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/9789240017542-eng-1.pdf) lack even basic water services, leaving 1.8 billion people reliant on 100s of 1000s of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in inexcusable conditions, with healthcare workers unable to adequately wash their hands. Economic costs are high: poor-quality healthcare in LMICs results in [US$1.4 to $1.6 trillion a year](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK535654/) in lost productivity.

Now WASH in healthcare facilities is being recognized as an essential service. A concerted advocacy effort has awakened global and national leadership to WASH as the foundation for global health, infection prevention and control, pandemic preparedness, and quality care. UN Secretary General Guterres, WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros, UNICEF Executive Director Fore, heads of state and First Ladies, Ministers of Health, Vatican officials, the Dalai Lama and so many more have expressed strong support, resulting in new policies, plans, funding goals and implementation. UNSG Guterres issued a Call-to-Action in 2018, WHO Member States unanimously adopted a 2019 World Health Assembly [Resolution](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA72/A72_R7-en.pdf) that includes 8 practical steps for global implementation by 2030. WHO and UNICEF added metrics to chart progress, and dozens of national governments are exploring concrete plans and resource requirements. More than 100 partners have made specific commitments to funding, technical assistance, research, training, maintenance and advocacy. Innovative new funding mechanisms are in formation, such as the [Sanitation and Hygiene Fund](https://www.shfund.org/) but more domestic resources and external support, including philanthropies, are needed.

**1. A safe healthcare facility is the cornerstone of a healthy community, and with WASH, Centers of Infection become Centers of Healing.**

Every infection prevented needs no treatment, causes no suffering, imposes no economic burden, and strengthens global health. That staff and patients cannot adequately wash their hands during COVID-19 merely underscores the lack of WASH as a critical—and solvable—global health crisis. WASH is a force multiplier that impacts dozens of development priorities, from girls education and women’s equality to reducing poverty and increasing economic development. When it comes to healthcare, clean water, toilets and soap are mandatory to prevent infections in patients and staff; protect mothers and newborns; provide safe surgery; contain antimicrobial resistance; advance pandemic preparedness; and WASH offers safety and dignity to people in their most vulnerable moments.

**2. Women want WASH.**

Unwashed hands, contaminated beds, and dirty instruments used to cut umbilical cords welcome far too many newborns into the world. In some places, newborns are not named because death is so commonplace. Every year, some [one million newborns die](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/newborns-reducing-mortality) within the first 24 hours and nearly [300,000 women die in childbirth](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality). Preventable infections are a leading cause. That’s just one reason why, when the White Ribbon Alliance [‘What Women Want’](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa813dd3917ee6dd2a0e09e/t/5d1120ccdf7cbc0001b99c57/1561403606693/What-Women-Want_Global-Findings.pdf) survey asked 1.2 million women and girls from 114 countries about their priorities to improve the quality of reproductive and maternal health services, getting WASH into healthcare facilities was their second demand after dignity, ranking #1 in a number of countries. Because women comprise [70% of the healthcare workforce](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf) and those utilizing health services are women, the lack of WASH in healthcare facilities disproportionately affects women.

**3. This global health crisis is solvable. Sustainability is the key.**

Improving WASH hinges not on scientific or advanced technological breakthroughs, but on integrated WASH and health systems. Health, water and finance institutions must de-silo and work across sectors, globally to locally. Solutions must include on-going training, maintenance and funding, or broken wells, pumps, pipes and faucets will inevitably result and rollback progress.

Learn more about commitments and share best practices, partnerships, news and events at: www.washinhealthcare facilities.org