The State of Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH) in Cameroon

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Conflict of interest

- No conflict of interest
Introduction/Context

- Infection Prevention & Control, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (IPC/WASH) are the foundation of quality health care and cornerstone for universal health care and multiple health interventions like hand hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfections, antimicrobial stewardship, clean hospitals etc.

- Every health care facility needs necessary and functional IPC/WASH services to provide essential and quality health services.
Global context

- Nearly half the world’s population lives without a safe toilet
- At least 2 billion people still use a drinking water source contaminated with feces
- Only 50% of the health facilities have hand washing facilities.
- 2.3 billion people lack basic hygiene services, including soap and water at home. This includes 670 million people with no handwashing facilities at all.
- In 28 countries, at least 1 in 4 people have no handwashing facility at home.
- Lack of adequate sanitation facilities for girls reaching puberty makes them more likely to miss school than boys

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/wash_statistics.html, July 30, 2022
Definition of Infection Prevention & Control

According to WHO, “infection prevention and control (IPC) is a scientific approach and practical solution designed to prevent harm caused by infection to patients and health workers. It is grounded in infectious diseases, epidemiology, social science, and health system strengthening. IPC occupies a unique position in the field of patient safety and quality universal health coverage since it is relevant to health workers and patients at every single health care encounter.”

WASH

- WASH stands for Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
- WASH is essential to providing equitable and quality healthcare, protecting healthcare workers and patients from infections, and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.
- Depends on sustainable access to safe water and improved sanitation facilities to ensure quality of care.
- It is the cornerstone of any infection prevention and control (IPC) program
- The absence of or poor compliance with WASH standards can lead to healthcare associated infections (HAIs)
- Increased infection and disease rates translate into a greater need for and use of antibiotics, and increased risk of AMR

Importance of WASH

- Health workers and patients require provision of water, sanitation, waste management, hygiene, and environmental cleaning infrastructure and services across all parts of a facility.

- Effective WASH lead to
  - Reductions in HAIs & mortality
  - Cost savings
  - Reductions in antibiotic use and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Basic WASH Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WATER</td>
<td>Water is available from an improved source on the premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANITATION</td>
<td>Improved sanitation facilities are usable, with at least one toilet dedicated to staff, at least one sex-separated toilet with menstrual hygiene facilities, and at least one toilet accessible for people with limited mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HYGIENE</td>
<td>Functional hand hygiene facilities (with water and soap and/or alcohol-based hand rub) are available at points of care, and within five metres of toilets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASTE MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Waste is safely segregated into at least three bins, and sharps and infectious waste are treated and disposed of safely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING</td>
<td>Basic protocols are available and all staff with cleaning responsibilities have received training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Cameroon Health System

- 10 regional delegations of health
- 181 health districts
- >5000 health facilities
  - 2,260 public health facilities
  - 4 general hospitals
  - 3 central hospitals
  - 14 regional hospitals
  - 164 district hospitals
  - 155 sub-division medical centres (CMA)
- 1,920 integrated health
- Private clinics & Faith Based facilities
Goal

To generate baseline WASH data for Cameroon

To use findings for advocacy
Methodology

Period: November 29 to December 31, 2020

Design: Cross sectional. Convenient sampling was done based on proximity to the monitor due to limited funding.

Access permission was obtained from the head of each facility on arrival; no facility refused access.

Hospitals, integrated health centers, and health posts were included.

Data collected by trained WASH monitors, by visual inspection, using WHO/UNICEF tools.

The staff from the facility was given on-the-spot orientation on how to complete the form.
Methodology Cont.

- It was a cross sectional study.
- A total of 103 health facilities from 35 health districts, found in six of ten regions in Cameroon were assessed by visual inspection and grading using the WHO/UNICEF WASH Facility Improvement tool (WASHFIT) and Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment tool.
- The scores ranged from 1-3, 1, being indicators that were not met, 2 for indicators partially met and 3 for indicators that were fully met.
- Only indicators that were fully met were used to calculate WASH coverage for each facility.
- All the six components of the WASHFIT tool were covered.
Results

- 103 health facilities from 35 health districts in six regions assessed including
  - 16 hospitals
  - 47 Integrated health centers
  - 40 health posts
Most of the health facilities were found in the NWR because most of monitors were based there.
Hospitals 15%

Integration Health Center 46%

Health Post 39%

Majority of the health facilities were integrated health centers followed by health posts
33% of the health facilities were inadequate with 60% of them being health posts.
WASH Coverage in Cameroon by type of facility (N=103)

WASH coverage is lower in health posts and IHC compared to hospitals
Water supply

- Standard:
  - Water is available from an improved source on the premises and piped to all service delivery areas
  - Etc

**Reality**

61% (63 out of 103) facilities had water within the facility

23% (24 out of 103) facilities had no water at all
Hand hygiene

**Standard**

- Hand hygiene stations should be available at all point of care and waste disposal sites
- Etc

**Reality**

- Only 56% (58/103) had functional hand hygiene stations at all points of care
- 10.7% (11/103) had no functional hand hygiene station at all.
- 69% (71/103) facilities have no functioning hand hygiene stations at waste disposal sites
Sanitation

Standard:
• Sufficient number of improved toilets or latrines are available, and separated according to staff and patient; male and female, with menstrual hygiene facilities
• At least one toilet accessible for people with limited mobility.
• Functioning hand hygiene stations at latrines
• Etc

Reality

Only 35% (36/103) facilities had basic sanitation services
58% (60/103) facilities do not have toilets with menstrual hygiene management systems
71.84% (74/103) facilities do not have any toilet adapted for people with limited mobility
Toilets in PHC not meeting IPC/WASH standards
Waste Management

Standard

- A trained person is responsible for health waste
- Waste is safely segregated into at least three bins, and sharps and infectious waste are treated and disposed of safely.
- Protocols or SOPs for waste management are in place
- Etc

Reality

- Only 35.44% (36/103) facilities have basic waste services
- 46 out of 103 facilities do not have any person directly responsible for waste management
- 17 facilities do not sort waste at all
- 81 facilities do not have protocol or SOP for safe waste management
### Environmental Cleaning and disinfection

#### Standard
- Basic protocols are available and all staff with cleaning responsibilities have received training.
- PPE are available for cleaning and waste management.
- Records of cleaning are available and signed by the housekeepers each day.
- Etc.

#### Reality
- Only 43 out of 103 facilities (42%) meet minimum standards.
- 14 facilities do not have sufficient cleaning material.
- 22 facilities do not have Personal protective equipment.
- 35 facilities had no insecticide-treated nets over the beds.
- 71 facilities had no record or checklists.
- 10 facilities did not have sufficient natural ventilation.
- 22 facilities do not have adequate spacing between beds.
Management

Standard

- There is adequate budget for WASH infrastructure and operations
- Cleaning and maintenance staff are adequate
- Audit of hand hygiene and cleaning keeping supplies are done regularly
- There are written job descriptions and performance appraisals are done at least yearly
- Etc

Reality

- Up to 81 out 103 facilities had no annual planned budget for housekeeping
- 72 facilities do not conduct regular ward-based audits of hand hygiene supplies
- 46 facilities had no form of IPC orientation for new personnel
- 40 facilities do not have trained House Keepers
- 49 facilities do not have a dedicated WASH or IPC focal person
- 44 facilities had no job description for house keepers and performance appraisals are not done
Conclusion

WASH coverage in Cameroon is unacceptably low in many health facilities.

The situation is worst in health posts and integrated health centers than in the hospitals.

Assessing more facilities could give a better picture of the WASH situation in Cameroon.

There is need to prioritize WASH in health facilities in Cameroon.
Questions for discussion

- What is the implication of these findings on IPC, HAI, AMR, and the quality of care?
- What is the state of WASH in your facility, region, & country?
- How can we improve WASH in your facility, region, & country?
Acknowledgements

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