

Summary report on the

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Consultation meeting to develop a road map for improving water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Amman, Jordan
10 August 2016



**World Health
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Summary of discussions	3
3.	The way forward.....	7

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA) convened a one-day consultation meeting to develop a road map for improving water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in Amman, Jordan on 10 August 2016. Participants attended the meeting from 12 countries, along with experts from WHO headquarters, academic institutions in Jordan and UNICEF Jordan.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- review findings of current initiatives on assessing the situation of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region;
- identify the regional challenges and opportunities for improving water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities; and
- develop a road map for improving the situation of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in his opening message, noted that many health care facilities in low- and middle-income countries in the Region had not paid enough attention to environmental health, particularly water, sanitation and hygiene services, in health care facilities and that many facilities still did not meet WHO essential environmental health standards, including the minimum water, sanitation and hygiene standards, in health care facilities due to a lack of resources and skills or adequate institutional support. This compromised the ability to provide basic, routine services, such as child delivery.

Dr Alwan observed that a CEHA assessment of water, sanitation and hygiene, and health care waste, in four countries of the Region in 2015, had revealed a need for comprehensive policies on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities and that very little data was available, especially for sanitation and hygiene.

He stressed that the proposed road map would enhance the capacity of the health sector in the Region to ensure that every health care facility had sufficient and functioning water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health services, as an integral component of quality care, maternal and newborn health, infection prevention and control, and outbreak prevention and response.

The workshop comprised three sessions. The first focused on a situation analysis of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities, including an overview of the global action plan on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities and the key activities of the four global task teams on advocacy and policy, monitoring, evidence and research, and standards and facility improvements.

The second session looked at the road map's goal, objectives, basic principles and strategic directions, while the third session focused on the road map's components (governance, service provision, surveillance and monitoring), along with the WHO Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool (WASH FIT) and its implementation in low-income African countries. The road map's components were discussed in working groups.

2. Summary of discussions

Road map

As the preliminary road map is based on available information from a few countries in the Region, more information and data are needed for validation of the road map. The framework of the road map, its goal, objectives and the proposed strategic directions should work towards implementation of the global action plan on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities and realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 for universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene in all settings, including health care facilities.

The information gap

There is a lack of data and information at country level due to a lack of monitoring and reporting on the status of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities. However, available information shows that many health care facilities in the Region do not meet WHO essential environmental health standards for health care. This compromises the ability to provide basic, routine services such as child delivery and prevention and control of nosocomial infections in health care settings.

Challenges in managing water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities

There are common water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health priorities and challenges shared by countries of the Region. The available information shows that large disparities in coverage of water, sanitation and hygiene services in health care facilities exist between and within countries and many health care facilities have significantly low water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health coverage.

Inequalities and disparities between urban and rural and rich and poor areas are clearly noticed.

There is a need to strengthen national capacities and processes for the assessment, analysis and monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities, including adoption of water, sanitation and hygiene indicators in the health management information system. Effective functioning of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities depends upon the level of implementation of WHO essential environmental health standards for health care and the leadership role of the ministry of health/health sector in sustaining and maintaining water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health services for better quality of care in the Region.

Two major challenges in countries of the Region are the lack of funds (and budget lines) for maintaining and sustaining water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health services in health care facilities and a lack of capacity. The current context of chronic emergencies also poses a major problem for providing and maintaining water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health services in health care settings.

Good practices

Good practices on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities were reported, including inspection of water, sanitation, hygiene and other environmental health issues in health care facilities in Tunisia and health care waste coverage in the hospital accreditation system in Lebanon. There is a need to document and share good practices on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.

Institutional responsibilities

Water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities are under the responsibility of the ministry of health/health sector (for governance, service provision, and surveillance and monitoring). However, other water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health actors, including waste management agencies, water authorities and nongovernmental organizations, play a critical catalytic role in galvanizing resources and in providing technical expertise on policies and standards and infrastructure options. The role of the ministry of health needs to be strengthened and activated in the development, implementation, and surveillance and monitoring of policies and standards on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.

Opportunities for improving water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities

There is a need to integrate water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities within the inspection, monitoring and reporting systems of health care facilities, in line with new global indicators proposed by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation. Work also needs to be done to integrate water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities in health sector programmes, including maternal and child health, infection prevention control, antimicrobial resistance and health system strengthening.

National policy, strategy and plans on environmental health (including water, sanitation and hygiene) in health care facilities need to be developed with relevant departments in the ministry of health, in collaboration with concerned stakeholders. National standards and

indicators for measuring the performance of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities should be developed and implemented based upon the WHO essential environmental health standards in health care. Evidenced-based information needs to be generated for advocacy and to facilitate the process of decision-making, especially in the formulation or updating of national policies and legislation on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.

Needed technical resource and guidance

There is a need for capacity-building and technical support in the development of national policies, strategies, plans and standards on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities. WASH FIT needs to be adapted to national conditions and promoted for implementation in health care facilities (public and private), especially in less-resourced health care settings and during epidemic outbreaks and emergencies. There is also a need for manuals, guidelines and roadmaps on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.

Advocacy and information sharing

There is a need for advocacy to engage countries in promoting the use of WHO essential environmental health standards in health care and WASH FIT, especially in less-resourced facilities in low- and middle-income countries in the Region. The sharing of research findings and up-to-date information, such as on the burden of disease related to water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities, is needed to further promote and support continuous improvements of water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.

3. The way forward

- A comprehensive assessment should be conducted to generate country and regional profiles on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities.
- The draft road map should be considered a preliminary draft at this stage. It should be further developed with information generated by the comprehensive assessment.
- Good practices on water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental health in health care facilities should be documented and shared.

The image features a minimalist, abstract design composed of several rectangular blocks. A large teal block occupies the top right and bottom right portions. A grey block is positioned in the top left. A horizontal grey band runs across the middle. A dark grey block is located in the bottom left. The bottom of the image is a solid grey bar containing white text.

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