

New report: Lack of water in health facilities puts patients at risk

A new [report](#), released in April by the Unicef-WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, reveals that 51% of healthcare facilities in sub-Saharan Africa do not have a clean source of water on site.



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Access to clean water in a medical facility means that healthcare workers can clean their hands with soap and water. The simple practice of healthcare workers cleaning hands with soap and water can have a dramatic effect on the reduction of diseases which may spread via unclean hands.

In an effort to determine the true impact of a lack of clean water in healthcare facilities in sub-Saharan countries, the report has revealed:

- 26% of people living in sub-Saharan Africa have no water service at all at their healthcare facility.
- There were not enough countries with basic estimates to calculate the coverage of basic hygiene services in healthcare facilities. Furthermore, only half (51%) of healthcare facilities had alcohol-based hand rub at points of care.

The report also includes data revelations on the rapid pace at which infections spread in facilities that operate without access to water, decent sanitation, hygiene and proper waste management procedures:

- Globally, 225 000 babies die of sepsis in their first four weeks of life - most of whom are in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Many of these deaths might have been prevented had they been born into a clean environment, where birthing attendants were able to wash their hands properly with soap and water.

- In addition, antibiotic resistance stands to worsen while nearly half of the healthcare facilities in the developing world are without a basic level of water service.

World Hand Hygiene Day, which took place on 5 May 2019, focuses on raising awareness about the importance of hand washing and its effectiveness in reducing the spread of diseases. As such, WaterAid Southern Africa is urging governments in Southern Africa to help ensure clean water and hygiene in every hospital and health clinic, and we call upon them to renew this commitment at the World Health Assembly between 20-28 May.

Chilufya Chileshe, WaterAid Southern Africa advocacy manager said: "This data reveals that many sub-Saharan African nations have some of the lowest rates of access to water and hygiene in their medical facilities, in the world. Quality healthcare for all cannot be achieved if half of the health facilities in sub-Saharan Africa are without a basic level of water service.

"In our interconnected world, a health crisis that threatens one community now may threaten us all. We call upon leaders to address this situation and make water, sanitation and hygiene a top priority in ensuring healthcare for all."

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