



## State of the World's Healthcare Facilities

**For Prelims:** World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Water Week, World Health Assembly, Swachh Bharat, National Rural Drinking Water Mission (NRDWM), Sunidhi Toilet project.

**For Mains:** Significance of Hygiene at Healthcare Facilities.

### Why in News?

According to the latest [Joint Monitoring Programme \(JMP\) report](#) by [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) and [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), about half of the world's healthcare facilities lack basic hygiene services, putting 3.85 billion people at an increased risk of infections.

- The report was released during [World Water Week](#) held in Stockholm, Sweden.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Lack of Basic Hygiene:**
  - About **half of the world's healthcare facilities lack basic hygiene services, putting 3.85 billion people at an increased risk of infections.**
    - These facilities **do not provide patients with water, soap, or alcohol-based hand rubs.**
    - **Only 51% of healthcare facilities met the requirements** for basic hygiene services.
    - **Some 68% of them provided facilities for handwashing with water and soap at restrooms** and 65% had such amenities at points of care.
      - Furthermore, **just one in 11 medical facilities worldwide has both.**
- **Lethal for Vulnerable Population:**
  - Hospitals and clinics without safe water and basic hygiene and sanitation services are a **potential death trap for pregnant mothers, newborns and children.**
- **Rise of Various Diseases:**
  - Every year, a **whopping 670,000 newborns lose their lives to sepsis.**
    - Sepsis is a potentially **life-threatening condition that occurs when the body's response to an infection damages its own tissues.**
- **Increased Disease Transmission:**
  - Unhygienic hands and environment significantly **influence disease transmission in healthcare facilities and the emergence of antibiotic resistance.**
  - Only 53% of healthcare institutions in the least developed countries have access to a safe water supply.
    - The proportion for **eastern and south-eastern Asia is 90%, with hospitals performing better than smaller healthcare facilities.**
      - Some 11% of the rural and 3% of urban healthcare institutions lacked access to water.

## What is the Importance of Hygiene Facilities?

- Hygiene facilities and practices in health care settings are non-negotiable.
- Their improvement is **essential to pandemic recovery, prevention and preparedness**.
- Promoting access to handwashing with water and soap and cleaning is essential for providing **high-quality health care**, especially for safe deliveries.

## How Could the Issue be tackled?

- As the coverage of WASH facilities is still uneven across different regions and income groupings.
  - There is a need for countries to **implement their 2019 World Health Assembly commitment to strengthen [water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#) services in health care facilities**.

## What are the Indian Government Initiatives related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)?

- **Present Status:**
  - **Urban Centers Bear the Brunt:**
    - Nationally, **910 million citizens do not have access to proper sanitation**.
      - Despite urban centers housing the majority of India's population, urban sanitation is underfunded.
- **Initiatives:**
  - **Swachh Bharat's Toilet Access and Job Creation:**
    - It aims to **reduce open defecation in India**. Between 2018 and 2019, 93% of households had access to toilets, a noticeable jump from 77% in the previous year.
    - The construction of the sanitation infrastructure is responsible for **employing more than 2 million full-time workers**.
  - **Water in Rural Communities:**
    - Between 2017 and 2018, India's national water mission expanded to become the **[National Rural Drinking Water Mission \(NRDWM\)](#)**.
      - While other programs and departments address sanitation in urban centers, **NRDWM cares for the rural regions of India**.
      - One **goal is the institution of piped water supplies to rural households**.
  - **ijal Safe Water Stations:**
    - The Safe Water Network, a **nonprofit organization** created by Paul Newman, has reached communities through its ijal water stations.
      - The locally owned stations **provide access to clean, quality water in communities where water security is scarce**.
  - **WASH Allies:**
    - USAID and UNICEF work in cooperation with the Government of India.
    - As of September 2020, **USAID reported recent achievements**, including greater access to safe drinking water, more household toilets and a decrease in public defecation.

## Way Forward

- Hygiene in healthcare facilities cannot be secured without **increasing investments in basic measures, which include safe water, clean toilets and safely managed healthcare waste**.
- UNICEF stresses on demand creation in communities where open defecation is still common, improve supply of sanitation products and services in communities where open defecation is low but there are high proportions of unimproved latrines, and promote innovative financing solutions in communities where basic sanitation coverage is high, but some households (often the poorest and marginalized) have yet to be reached.

## **Prelims**

**Q. With reference to bio-toilets used by the Indian Railways, consider the following statements: (2015)**

1. The decomposition of human waste in the biotoilets is initiated by a fungal inoculum.
2. Ammonia and water vapour are the only end products in this decomposition which are released into the atmosphere.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (d)**

- Bio-toilet project of Indian Railways is an innovative and an indigenous development of technology. This technology is the first of its kind and is being used for the first time by any railroad in the world for onboard accelerated digestion of human waste.
- These bio-toilets are fitted underneath the lavatories and the human waste discharged into them is acted upon by a colony of anaerobic bacteria that convert human waste, mainly into water and a small amount of bio-gases like Methane, Ammonia etc. Hence, statements 1 and 2 are not correct.
- The gases escape into the atmosphere and waste water is discharged after chlorination onto the track.
- Human waste, thus, does not fall on the railway tracks, thus improving cleanliness and hygiene at platforms, and facilitate track and coaches maintenance staff to perform their work more efficiently. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer

**Source: DTE**

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