

Water Action Agenda Commitment ***As submitted 16 March 2023***

Title/name of commitment: Accelerating professionalized water supply and sanitation services through capacity building including in regulation for dramatic improvements in water, sanitation, and hygiene in communities and health care facilities

Lead entity name: World Health Organization

Lead entity type: UN Agency

SDGs covered by commitment: SDGs 3, 5 and 6

Contact information: WHO WSH Unit

Partners and beneficiaries

- **Partners:** UN System Partners, including UNICEF, Development Banks, Civil Society
- **Countries:** Global Governments, WASH Regulators, Regional Regulation Networks, Group of Friends of WASH in Health Care Facilities
- **Other beneficiaries:** WASH and Health Ministries, national and regional WASH service providers and regulatory authorities, health care practitioners, community members

Details

This initiative is a multi-partner collaboration led by WHO to promote human-health related risk management approaches by:

- Strengthening the capacity of water and sanitation regulators to support professionalized service delivery through the WHO International Network of Drinking-water and Sanitation Regulators (RegNet), and
- Accelerating efforts to improve WASH in Health Care Facilities, including through WASH-FIT

Unless progress quadruples, according to the WHO UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, billions of people around the world will be unable to access safely managed household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in 2030.¹ In addition, half of health care facilities worldwide lack basic hygiene services with water and soap or alcohol-based hand rub where patients receive care and at toilets in these facilities.²

Regulations are a powerful tool that can be used to improve safe drinking-water and sanitation service delivery. In the absence of regulations, accountability and liability may be compromised, leading to increased risks to public health that may go undetected among consumers until outbreaks of water-borne diseases occur. Even when in place, regulations are not always used to their full potential and best advantage to maximize public health benefits and to ensure sustained, affordable service delivery meeting agreed service levels. WHO will continue to support capacity on health protective water and sanitation service delivery, working with

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-07-2021-billions-of-people-will-lack-access-to-safe-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-2030-unless-progress-quadruples-warn-who-unicef>

² <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-08-2022-half-of-health-care-facilities-globally-lack-basic-hygiene-services--who--unicef>

utilities, municipalities and their development partners (i.e. through water and sanitation safety planning) in addition to accelerated action on regulation via RegNet.

Risk management approaches such as water and sanitation safety planning, and tools such as WASH FIT for improving and sustaining services in health care facilities and water and sanitation sanitary inspection forms, are well-proven and offer even more potential for scaling up. As identified in the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, “capacity development, monitoring and evaluation are essential for improving service levels, operating and maintaining technology, increasing job creation in the water sector, and monitoring performance, including at community level.”³

As a guiding principle, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) considerations will be integrated within the commitment initiative.

This initiative will rely on the network of WHO and partner country offices and their in-country stakeholders, including at ministries of health and WASH, and other in-country NGOs/INGOs to deliver tailored professional training and outreach to community members in practical, useful elements of the risk management approaches. This would include, for example, conducting training and building a cadre of regulators to conduct sanitary inspections for small drinking water systems, use sanitation inspection forms for different types of toilets, and supporting health facility staff, particularly female ones, to improve and sustain WASH, waste management and environmental cleaning approaches for primary health care facilities, which serve largely women and children. Efforts will also support strengthening budgets, financing and investments in women and child appropriate WASH services to ensure that training and regulatory efforts bear fruit. In general, the initiative will complement broader efforts to progressively achieve professionalized services by working with governments and influencing policies to support a diverse, paid workforce as well as mechanisms which make training institutionalized and sustainable.

Expected impact (up to 500 words)

- Drinking water and sanitation regulators develop improved capacities to develop, implement, monitor and/or enforce a set of specific rules to ensure drinking water safety and safe management of the sanitation chain, to protect public health.
- Risk-based quality improvement (WASH-FIT, WSP, SSP) are implemented and monitored, with demonstrated service level improvements across countries
- Improved public health outcomes, such as reduced incidence of water-borne diseases and improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Deliverables

- A strengthened WHO-led International Network of Drinking-water and Sanitation Regulators (RegNet) promoting professionally managed and regulated services to protect public health
- A WHO-led climate resilient health infrastructure Global Taskforce coordinating action to accelerate improvement of water, sanitation, hygiene, health care waste management and energy in health centres around the world.

³ <https://www.unwater.org/sites/default/files/app/uploads/2020/07/Global-Acceleration-Framework.pdf>