

3. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF HAND WASHING WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO PREVENTION OF COVID -19

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ABSTRACT

Hand washing also known as hand hygiene, is the act of cleaning one's hands with soap and water to remove viruses/bacteria/germs/microorganisms. If water and soap are not available, hands can be cleaned with ash although the benefits and harms are uncertain for reducing the spread of viral or bacterial infections. This is especially important for people who handle food or work in the medical field, but also an important practice for the general public. Hand hygiene is one of the most important element of infection control activities.

KEYWORDS : Hand hygiene, covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Hygiene is closely correlated with human health. of the Sustainable Development Goals (Target 6.2) recognizes that access to facilities allowing good hygiene and sanitation should be universal, and especially important to women and girls, and those in vulnerable situations. Hand hygiene is regarded as one of the most important element of infection control activities. In the wake of the growing burden of health care associated infections (HCAIs), the increasing severity of illness and complexity of treatment, superimposed by multi-drug resistant

(MDR) pathogen infections, health care practitioners (HCPs) are reversing back to the basics of infection preventions by simple measures like hand hygiene. This is because enough scientific evidence supports the observation that if properly implemented, hand hygiene alone can significantly reduce the risk of cross-transmission of infection in healthcare facilities (HCFs).

The availability of a basic handwashing facility is a prerequisite for basic hygiene facilities on premises, and is a useful proxy for hygienic behaviour.

NEED FOR HAND WASHING

Handwashing with soap, when done correctly, is critical in the fight against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), but millions of people have no ready access to a place to wash their hands, UNICEF said today. In total, only 3 out of 5 people worldwide have basic handwashing facilities, according to the latest data. As the pandemic continues its spread, UNICEF is reminding the public of the importance of handwashing as a key prevention measure against COVID-19 and urging renewed efforts to provide access to this most basic of public health interventions around the world. "Handwashing with soap is one of the cheapest, most effective things you can do to protect yourself and others against

coronavirus, as well as many other infectious diseases. Yet for billions, even this most basic of steps is simply out of reach.” (Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF Director of Programmes)

In many parts of the world, children, parents, teachers, healthcare workers and other members of the community do not have access to basic handwashing facilities at home, in healthcare facilities, schools or elsewhere. UNICEF works around the world to ensure children and their parents have access to appropriate handwashing facilities. Additionally, UNICEF promotes handwashing in over 90 countries, working with governments to develop handwashing policies, strategies and action plans. According to the latest estimates:

- 40 per cent of the world’s population, or 3 billion people, do not have a handwashing facility with water and soap at home. Nearly three quarters of the people in least developed countries lack basic handwashing facilities at home.
- 47 per cent of schools lacked a handwashing facility with water and soap affecting 900 million school-age children. Over one third of schools worldwide and half of schools in the least developed countries have no place for children to wash their hands at all.
- 16 per cent of healthcare facilities, or around 1 in 6, have no hygiene service, meaning they lack hand hygiene facilities where patients receive care, as well as soap and water at toilets.
- Urban populations are particularly at risk of viral respiratory infections due to population density and more frequent public gatherings in crowded spaces like markets, public transport or places of worship. People living in urban poor slums – the worst form of informal settlement – are particularly at risk. As a result, handwashing becomes even more important.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, 63 per cent of people in urban areas, or 258 million people, lack access to handwashing. Some 47 per cent of urban South Africans, for example, or 18 million people, lack basic handwashing facilities at home with the richest urban dwellers nearly 12 times more likely to have access to handwashing facility.

- In Central and South Asia, 22 per cent of people in urban areas, or 153 million people, lack access to handwashing. Nearly 50 per cent of urban Bangladeshis, for example, or 29 million people; and 20 per cent of urban Indians, or 91 million, lack basic handwashing facilities at home.

- In East Asia, 28 per cent of urban Indonesians, or 41 million people, and 15 per cent of urban Filipinos, or 7 million people, lack basic handwashing facilities at home.

- People with basic handwashing facilities including soap and water, urban (% of urban population) varies by country. The shade of the country corresponds to the magnitude of the indicator. The darker the shade, the higher the value. The country with the highest value in the world is Turkmenistan, with a value of 100.00. The country with the lowest value in the world is Liberia, with a value of 1.76.

Handwashing is also key to protect health workers from infection and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infections in healthcare facilities. As the coronavirus response takes its toll on the health services in the affected countries, the practice of handwashing with soap is even more important in warding off common respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases.

As part of their coronavirus response, UNICEF is also reminding the public of the best way to wash their hands properly:

1. Wet hands with running water
2. Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

3. Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including back of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse thoroughly with running water
5. Dry hands with a clean cloth or single-use towel

The WHO guidelines on “Hand Hygiene in Healthcare” describe five key situations where hand washing is required

- Before touching a patient
- Before a clean or aseptic procedure
- After body fluid exposure risk
- After touching a patient
- After touching patient surroundings

The Moments for Hand Hygiene (WHO)

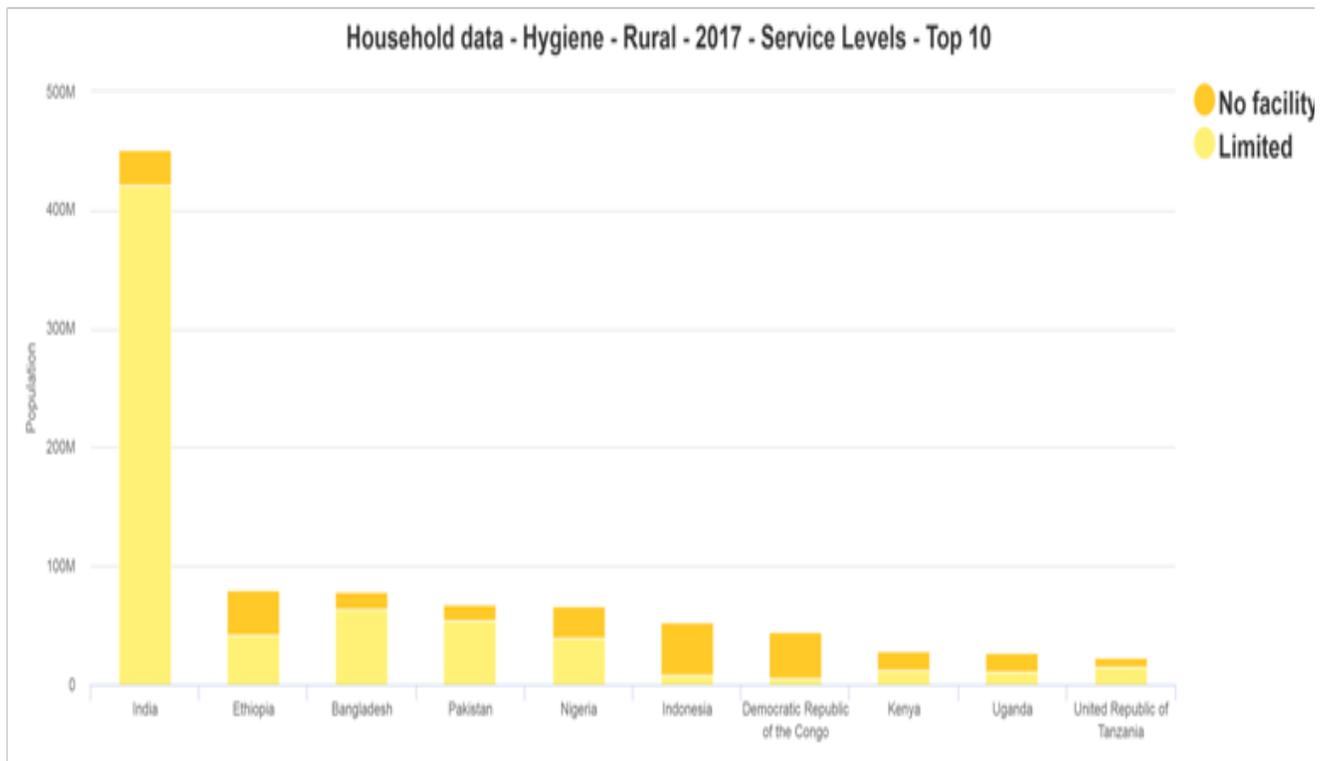


HAND HYGIENE IN INDIA

There is a debate about the reliability of surveys on handwashing and how statistics are captured. According to a national survey in 2011-12, 63% of households reported usually washing their hands with soap after defecation, a low figure for a country where toilet paper is rarely used.

More recent research conducted in India has, however, shown that the most reliable statistics about

hygiene practices are derived from an environmental check in which fieldworkers inspect the house for the presence of a water source with soap where people wash their hands. In India’s national demographic survey coordinated by the International Institute for Population Sciences in 2015-16, it was found that 39.8% of households had no soap or no water, a situation often explained by the absence of soap during the survey.



The chart indicates the people living in households in rural areas in 2017 as regards hygiene concerns. Handwashing facilities may be fixed or mobile and include a sink with tap water, buckets with taps, tippy-taps, and jugs or basins designated for handwashing. Soap includes bar soap, liquid soap, powder detergent, and soapy water but does not include ash, soil, sand or other handwashing agents. Across states, rural areas have lower access to a drinking source in their premises compared with urban areas. Limited access to water and the absence of hygiene could pose significant challenges in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic in several parts of rural India. If the gains from the lockdown were to be sustained, these issues would require urgent attention.

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