

Bridging the Gap to Meet the Global Targets of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services: World Health Organization

Dear Editor,

The delivery of reliable and accessible water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services across the world has been identified as an important global public health priority.^[1] In fact, the Sustainable Development Goal 6 targets to accomplish the availability and persistent management of water and sanitation facilities for all and to abolish the practice of open defecation.^[2] However, the ground reality is that millions of people are still compelled to drink contaminated water, not finding adequate water to wash their hands, and are still practicing open-air defecation.^[2] However, it is quite disheartening that millions of people across the world are exposed to life-threatening infections only because we are falling short in our actions.^[1,2] We have to admit that these are quite alarming estimates which emphasize the need to take more dedicated efforts to improve the existing scenario.^[1-3]

The available data suggest that most of the nations have come up with comprehensive WASH plans, including the average cost for implementation of the same.^[4] However, it is surprising that more than 85% of the nations have no or limited financial support to implement these plans.^[4,5] It has been defined that a nation will be considered as having sufficient financial resources only when they have more than 75% of the amount of money which has been specified to implement national plans.^[4] Owing to the insufficient funding, we are lagging extremely behind in terms of the targets to be accomplished, especially because of the lack of resources and support.^[5]

On the similar lines, despite the establishment of norms and frequency of assessment for drinking/waste water, close to 90% of nations are not adhering to them in urban settings itself.^[4] Moreover, the regulatory agencies have failed to take remedial actions against the offenders.^[2] The encouraging sign is that in order to accomplish the specified goals, the policymakers have taken steps to align the essential elements, including setting higher targets for safely managed drinking water and sanitation facilities.^[2,4] In fact, nations have been successful in delivering better WASH services after the institution of holistic plans and supporting the same with resources.^[4]

In addition, measures have been taken to reach the vulnerable population groups so that everyone can utilize the available services.^[3] Further, the external agencies have also started

giving priority toward the strengthening of WASH systems, including in the health-care facilities.^[3,4] Even though a gradual increase in support has been reported, nevertheless, we are yet to see improvement in the concerned indicators and health status.^[4]

In conclusion, it has become the need of the hour to advocate and ensure that investment in the form of financial support and human resources has to be done to improve and strengthen WASH services across the world, not only with an aim to accomplish global development goals, but also to lay down the foundations for a stable, safe, and progressive society.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Prateek Saurabh Shrivastava¹

Department of Community Medicine, Vice Principal Curriculum, Member of the Medical Education Unit and Institute Research Council, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University,

¹Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, India

Address for correspondence: Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV) – Deemed to be University, Tiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram - 603 108, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: drshrishri2008@gmail.com


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