

## India needs a Healthy Start as healthcare facilities across the country have poor water, sanitation and hygiene, finds WaterAid

**New Delhi:** With 167 maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births and 28 newborn deaths per 1,000 live births, India has one of the highest rates<sup>1</sup> of maternal and neonatal mortality in the world. One in five newborn deaths, could be prevented by ensuring access to clean water and by providing a clean birthing environment<sup>2</sup>.

To develop a greater understanding about the status of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in healthcare facilities, WaterAid India carried out assessments of WASH in 343 facilities in 12 districts across six<sup>3</sup> states over a period of 18 months. The findings highlight the poor status of WASH in healthcare facilities:

- Around 38 per cent of the sampled facilities in Ganjam district of Odisha were found to have open defecation within the premises
- 36 per cent of the sampled Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh) and 47 per cent in Nizamabad (Telangana) had inadequate water supply
- 75 per cent of the sampled PHCs and Community Health Centres (CHCs) in Bhopal, 87 per cent in Sehore and 95 per cent in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh had waste dumped in or around the healthcare facility
- Poor biomedical waste management (including segregation and disposal) was observed at all the 30 sampled health facilities across Raichur district in Karnataka. Though 83 per cent of the sampled facilities have required resources for biomedical waste management, appropriate procedures were not followed
- A total of 63 facilities were sampled in four districts of Uttar Pradesh, namely Agra, Banda, Lucknow and Varanasi. Toilets in all facilities were unclean with PHCs and CHCs having very low cleanliness ratings (average of 0.83 and 1.13 out of a score of 10 respectively) and district hospitals with an average score of 3.75 out of 10

In light of the increasing recognition that WASH plays a critical role in health outcomes and our assessment findings, WaterAid India has launched '[Healthy Start](#)', a new campaign with an aim to integrate safe WASH in healthcare facilities.

**Speaking at the campaign launch, Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste, Hon. Minister of State, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India said:**

"We need to plan in a more sustainable manner and not look towards stop gap schemes. Focus should not be just the provision of infrastructure but also ensuring that the services are accessible for people visiting these facilities.

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring effective implementation of government schemes to provide access to water, sanitation and hygiene in healthcare facilities. The community needs to be aware of their

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<sup>1</sup> Sample Registration Survey. Maternal Mortality Ratio. Available at: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/mmr\\_bulletin\\_2011-13.pdf](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/mmr_bulletin_2011-13.pdf) Accessed on 27 June 2016

<sup>2</sup> [http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/APR\\_2014\\_web\\_15Sept14.pdf](http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/APR_2014_web_15Sept14.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka

responsibilities to initiate this change and help in keeping hospitals clean. Government is open to suggestions from civil society on how to strengthen the implementation of schemes thus reaching out to every person with the appropriate services.”

The campaign was launched simultaneously in five locations across India, Delhi, Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar. The key objectives of the campaign are to influence change in neonatal and maternal healthcare for a shift from curative to preventive health services, strengthen the health delivery system and increase demand for safe WASH services in healthcare facilities.

**WaterAid India’s Director for Programmes & Policy, Avinash Kumar said:**

*“WaterAid believes that WASH is a critical determinant of health. For healthcare facilities to promote health, prevent infections and improve patient outcomes, they must have safe, adequate and functional water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well as inculcate hand hygiene practices among healthcare providers at all levels, caregivers, and patients.*

*Through this campaign, WaterAid India is calling the government, civil society and communities to come together to take action on WASH to ensure that every start of life is a Healthy Start.”*

**ENDS**

**For more information about the campaign please visit:**

[www.wateraidindia.in/HealthyStart](http://www.wateraidindia.in/HealthyStart)

**For more information or to arrange interviews please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

WaterAid’s vision is of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. The international organisation works in 37 countries across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Pacific Region to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in some of the world’s poorest communities. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 23 million people with safe water and, since 2004, 21 million people with sanitation. WaterAid began working in India in 1986 and has its focus on the poorer states in the country to better target India’s most vulnerable communities. For more information, visit [www.wateraidindia.in](http://www.wateraidindia.in), follow [@WaterAidIndia](https://twitter.com/WaterAidIndia) on Twitter, or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/WaterAidIndia](https://www.facebook.com/WaterAidIndia).

- Around 76 million people in India still lack access to improved water sources
- Around 560 million people in India still defecate in the open
- Over 140,000 children die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation in India