Frequent and proper hand hygiene is one of the most important measures that can be used to prevent infection with the COVID-19 virus.

There are two main routes of transmission of the COVID-19 virus: respiratory and poor hygiene.

The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies, and based on current evidence, the risk to water supplies is low.

Currently, there is no evidence about the survival of the COVID-19 virus in drinking-water or sewage.

Conventional, centralized water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection should inactivate the COVID-19 virus.

Use of handwashing facilities with soap and water at sub-national level doesn’t seem dependent on availability of basic water services

Kyrgyzstan data show handwashing facilities with soap and water across all wealth quintiles even in the absence of a basic water service

Large disparities in basic hand washing facilities with soap and water within Tajikistan and within Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Why are there no regional averages for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region?

In order to calculate regional estimates for the population with basic hygiene services, the WHO/UNICEF JMP needs data that cover at least 50 per cent of the regional population (30 per cent for schools and health care facilities). For the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, the JMP only holds data for six of the 21 countries for households, eight countries for schools and five countries for health care facilities. Together none of these meet the required population threshold. As a result the JMP is unable to calculate regional averages for basic hygiene services at health care facilities.
Regularly washing hands with soap and water is a behaviour that is difficult to measure at the population level. Asking people if, or when, they WASH their hands usually does not result in reliable answers as most people will be over-reporting their own “good” behaviour. The presence in a household, school or health care facility of a dedicated place or facility for washing hands and the presence of soap and water at that facility, has shown to be a good predictor for people regularly washing their hands with soap and water. A global expert panel suggested that this indicator be used to estimate actual hand washing behavior among a population. This then became the indicator for the monitoring of the SDG hygiene targets.


This Technical Brief supplements existing Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) documents by referring to and summarizing WHO guidance on water, sanitation and health care waste which is relevant for viruses (including coronaviruses).

UNICEF Hygiene Programming Guidance Note COVID-19 Emergency Response

This Note is intended for WASH and C4D officers working together on the COVID-19 outbreak preparedness and response. It provides guidance on which aspects to consider when planning and implementing a hygiene promotion campaign as part of a broader risk communication & community engagement strategy. The content is based on lessons learnt regarding gaps in hygiene promotion during past public health emergencies and general programming.

JMP Core Questions to Strengthen National Monitoring of SDG 6.1 and 6.2 on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene through Household Surveys and Censuses, Education Monitoring Information Systems (EMIS) and Health Management Information Systems (HMIS)

JMP core questions on water, sanitation and hygiene for household surveys

During the MDG period the JMP partnered with major international survey programmes to develop and standardize core questions and indicators for use in national household surveys and censuses which were the prime data sources for the JMP.

Since publication of the JMP core questions in 2006, international survey programmes have aligned their questionnaires and the core questions have been used extensively in national surveys and censuses around the world, leading to increased harmonization of national WASH data.

The indicators selected for monitoring the SDG WASH targets build on the established improved/unimproved facility type classification and introduce additional criteria, derived from the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, relating to the level of service provided.

Since 2012, the JMP has been collaborating with the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme and other inter-national survey programmes to develop and test new questions that address the SDG criteria for service levels, including an innovative new module for water quality testing in household surveys.

Harmonizing approaches to monitoring WASH in Schools

International consultations between 2011 and 2013 identified schools as a priority setting for global WASH monitoring post-2015. A preliminary UNICEF review identified 149 countries with existing national data on WASH in primary schools but, found indicator definitions were often missing and varied widely between national data sources, limiting the potential for cross-country comparison.

The WHO/UNICEF JMP subsequently convened a global task team of WASH and education experts to review global norms and standards and develop a harmonized set of core indicators and questions for monitoring basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools. The official global indicator for SDG target 4.a refers to these harmonized definitions for WASH in schools (‘as per WASH definitions’) and the core questions and indicators are increasingly being incorporated into national Education Information Management Systems (EMIS) and major school surveys around the world. Continued collaboration between WASH and education stakeholders will be important to support the progressive standardization of data collection and analysis for national and global reporting of WASH in schools.

Harmonizing approaches to monitoring WASH in Health Care Facilities

The core indicators and questions in this guide were developed by the Global Task Team for Monitoring WASH in Health Care Facilities (HCF), convened by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), and working under the auspices of the Global Action Plan on WASH in HCF. They are derived from current global normative documents, national standards and regulations, questions that have been used in facility assessment surveys and censuses, and the normative criteria of the human rights to water and sanitation: accessibility, availability, quality and acceptability.

National estimates can be derived from facility-based surveys that collect data via interviews and observations by trained enumerators, as well as routine administrative reporting systems filled out by health care workers and managers (e.g. Health Management Information Systems [HMIS]).

The core questions are intended to be:

1. applicable for use in different types of data collection mechanisms
2. relevant in all countries and settings
3. focused on the minimum criteria for provision of basic WASH services in HCF

For countries where the minimum criteria for basic WASH services are not aspirational and monitoring systems have the capacity for additional questions, the core questions can be supplemented with additional questions from a list of possible topics provided in Annex A of the guide. This document:

- describes why it is important to adopt a harmonized set of core questions for monitoring WASH in HCF;
- presents core indicator definitions for “basic” WASH services in HCF and associated service ladders;
- introduces core questions to support harmonized data collection to monitor WASH in HCF;
- provides an example of incorporating the core questions in national questionnaires (e.g. HMIS);
- presents examples of data analysis and tabulation to calculate coverage of “basic” WASH services in HCF; and
- suggests topics that could be used in detailed assessments that go beyond the minimum set of basic service indicators.

Download these and other JMP reports from: www.washdata.org/reports