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The analysis of water, sanitation, and hygiene services in healthcare facilities in Vanuatu, 2020

Ratu Bani¹, Theingi Soe², Sandrine Benjimen², Nelly Ham¹, Sam Mahit¹

¹Ministry of Health, Port Vila, Vanuatu. ²UNICEF, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Abstract

Background: In Vanuatu, a significant proportion of healthcare facilities (HCFs) struggles to provide quality healthcare services due to limited access to basic WASH services. In 2020, the Ministry of Health conducted the first national Health Facility Readiness and Service Availability (HFRSA) Assessment over a total of 159 health facilities. The survey showed that no facility provided a 100 percent complete and secure WASH service to the local population at the time of the assessment.

Methods: Facility assessments were undertaken by Ministry of health (MoH) across clinics, dispensaries, health centers and hospitals. Environmental Health unit formulated and incorporated WASH questionnaires into the survey to capture WASH.

Results: The analysis shows that 71.1% of HCF had access to basic water services according to WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) with improved water sources on the premises and water was available on the day of the survey while only 8.2% of HCFs had access to basic sanitation services that met JMP measures. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of HCFs had access to basic hygiene services with functional hand hygiene facilities available at one or more points of care and within 5 meters of toilets in accordance with JMP definition while only 13.2% of HCFs had basic health care waste management services. Only 5% of HCFs had basic cleaning services with basic protocols for cleaning available, and staff trained on cleaning protocols.

Discussion: Adequate WASH services in HCFs are critical elements for the delivery of quality and safe health care services. It can reduce the risk of health-acquired infections, tackle anti-microbial resistance, and improve patients' health outcomes. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve WASH services in HCFs and this requires aggressive and collaborative efforts amongst different stakeholders to address these issues for better health outcome for the people of Vanuatu.