

Case study



Nepal

Journey of WASH in HCF National Standard endorsement



Context

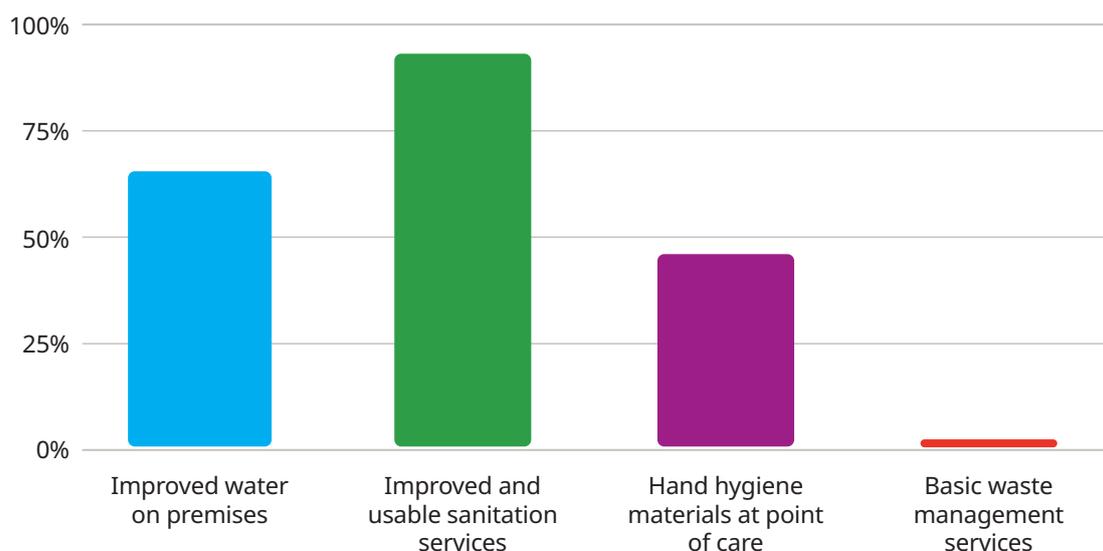
Against the backdrop of the global review conducted by the WHO and UNICEF in 2015 on the importance of WASH in HCF, the Constitution of Nepal established 'access to safe water and sanitation' as fundamental human rights. To support this, the Ministry of Water Supply developed a Total Sanitation guideline to eliminate open defecation and create an environment where everyone, everywhere has access to WASH facilities. Despite significant progress in improving basic drinking water and sanitation coverage in Nepal, WASH in HCF remains a challenge. Figure 7 is an example of this contrast, it shows how more than one-third (36%) of HCF lack improved water on premises, 8% have no improved and usable sanitation services, less than half (46%) have hand hygiene materials at the point of care, and just 1% with basic waste management services.²⁰

► These inclusive and user friendly WASH facilities at Jamuni Health post were constructed by WaterAid Nepal and its implementing partner Backward Society Education (BASE).



Figure 7: Status of WASH in HCF in Nepal

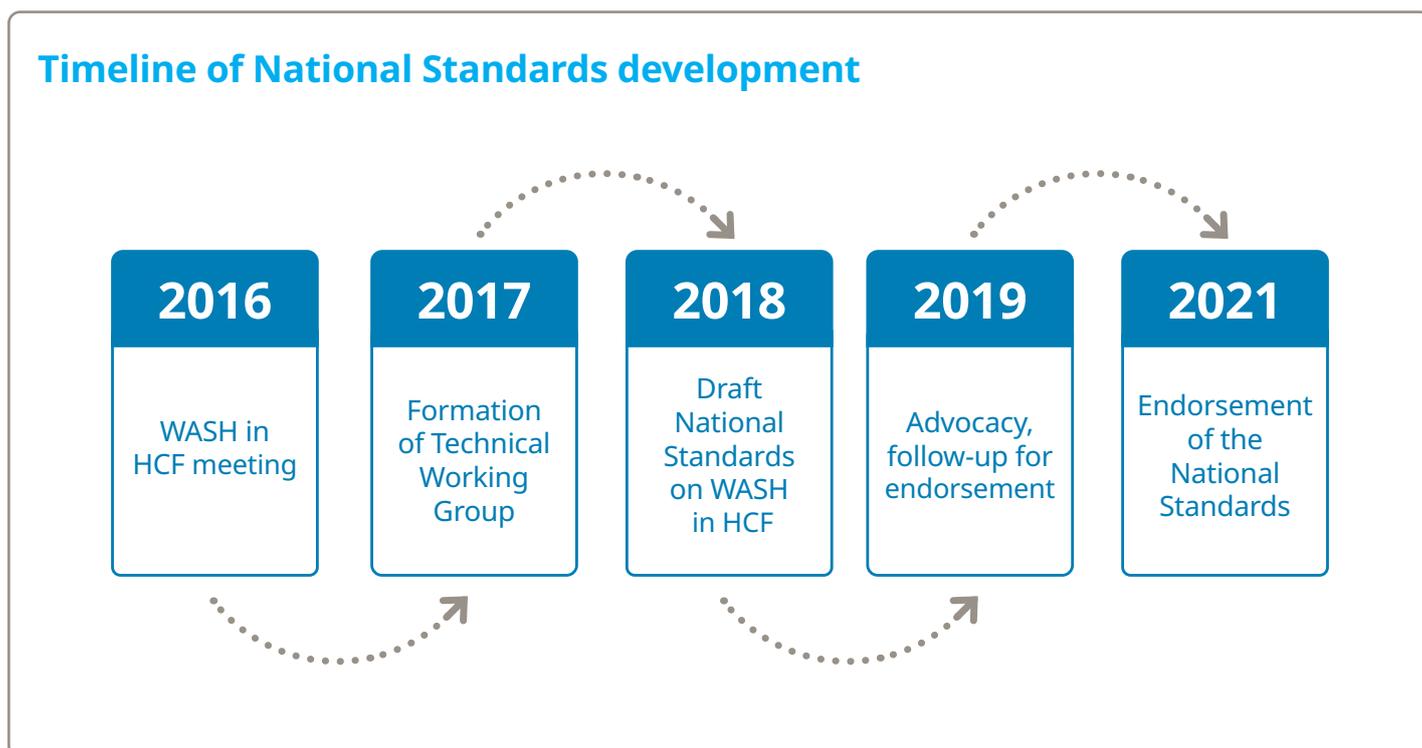
Status of WASH in HCF in Nepal



Source: WHO/UNICEF Baseline 2019

20. WHO (2021). *Global progress report on WASH in health care facilities: Fundamentals first*. Available at: [who.int/publications/i/item/9789240017542](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240017542) (accessed 6 Apr 2022).

Figure 8. Timeline of National Standard development



Blockages

Some of the barriers to progress on WASH in HCF in Nepal were as follows:

- **Lack of reporting and data.** There was a significant gap in evidence on the status of WASH HCF, and no data on which organisations were working in this area.
- **Lack of clear roles.** During 2016, there was no assigned body within Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to look at the WASH in HCF agenda. In early 2017, it was decided by MoHP to give the responsibilities to the Management Division.
- **Lack of waste management solutions.** There was limited work around healthcare waste management, which poses a risk for human and environmental health.
- **Lack of national standards on WASH in HCF.** The HCF worked to WHO guidelines, but did not have nationally contextualised standards.
- **Limited HCF WASH indicators or guidance for all levels of HCF.** There was only a minimum service standard for district level hospitals, which had limited WASH indicators.

Approach

WaterAid Nepal conducted an assessment of WASH in 20 different HCF in three districts, Siraha, Sindhuli and Makwanpur. As a result, evidence was generated and then shared in different health sector forums.

WaterAid Nepal collaborated with the WHO to conduct a policy dialogue on the integration of SDGs 3 and 6 in the presence of higher-level dignitaries from the MoHP, the National Planning Commission and the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage. During the policy dialogue meeting, the Health secretary guided a discussion with the Management Division and shared the evidence and ideas on WASH in HCF.

WaterAid Nepal, with coordination from the Management Division, conducted a review meeting asking different organisations working on WASH in HCF to share their plans and programmes. As a result, a technical working group (TWG) on WASH in HCF at the Federal level in Nepal was formed in 2017 under the MoHP, Management Division – with WaterAid Nepal acting as secretariat.

The TWG provided technical support in drafting the National Standards for WASH in HCF and carried out necessary follow-up activities and advocacy for its endorsement. As the secretariat to the TWG, WaterAid Nepal continuously advocated to finalise the National Standard and its endorsement with MoHP on a regular basis. Furthermore, the WHA resolution of 2019 on WASH in HCF also acted as an amplifying affect for Nepal's National Standard for WASH in HCF to be endorsed. Since then, the Management Division has already geared up to develop a costed roadmap for WASH in HCF.

As a result of continuous advocacy and follow up, the MoHP endorsed the WASH in HCF National Standard in July 2021.

The TWG formed during the standard development process was active and self-motivated. Two parallel TWGs were also formed during that time – one for healthcare waste management and another for WASH in HCF, both with similar members and interrelated issues – discussion around merging the two TWGs is ongoing. MoHP is committed to develop a roadmap of WASH in HCF to support the implementation of the WASH in HCF national standards. Similarly, orientation programmes on the standards at provincial level are also underway.

▼ Sunita Kharel is a Senior Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife at Bhumlutaar health post where a contactless handwashing station has been set up to help stop the spread of COVID-19, Kavre, Nepal. September 2020.



Key lessons

- Evidence based advocacy helped grab the attention of stakeholders and officials working on MoHP to prioritise WASH in HCF.
- Regular coordination and support among government and stakeholders also played an essential role to maintain the interest to work on WASH in HCF.
- Ownership and dedication of the stakeholders played a crucial role in getting the standards endorsed. Despite the challenging transitional political situation during the national standards development process, it was the motivation and ownership from government and TWG Members that made the endorsement possible. Individual champions within the MoHP are critical and can guide the process of endorsement and advocate for increase action on WASH in HCF.

Conclusions and recommendations

The endorsement of the National Standard on WASH in HCF is a success story in itself. The standards help identify and address gaps, improve the WASH status in HCF, and safeguard high quality service delivery.

From the formation of TWG to drafting the standards and advocating for its endorsement, WaterAid Nepal has been a driving force throughout the process.

When implementing WASH in HCF interventions, our recommendation is for:

- Governments to involve all TWG members in the implementation process.
- An action plan, guideline or road map, along with the required budget standards for the implementation of the standard, to be developed at the start of the process.
- The national standards to be accompanied by an orientation and sensitisation programme to avoid delays in implementation.