**Before the meeting**

* **Work with others** – See if other health professional associations or organisations are interested in working with you and joining you to meet with decision-makers. Consider contacting your national [WaterAid country programme](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HV2Ee2_F66bfE-JBg4VTr4Ju7e_erGZwyfshfT4EEqk/edit?usp=sharing) or other NGOs who may have ideas and knowledge that will help inform your approach.
* **Identify the most appropriate people to engage** – Think carefully about who best to connect with.
  + **Ministers are politicians** take ultimate responsibility, make final decisions and speak publicly. Research the specific responsibilities of the ministers, see if they have taken an interest in a relevant topic in the past (or have even been a health professional themselves). Also focus on their assistants – a good relationship with them can be crucial.
  + **Officials or civil servants are technical experts** who generally work behind the scenes, know more about the issues than ministers, and provide briefings to ministers for speeches or decision-making. Influencing these people can be crucial to securing a promise or commitment from a minister. Try to find out the hierarchy of officials with responsibility for healthcare facilities. Who is the most senior director? Who are beneath them? Have you or other health workers you know had engagement with them in the past, and are they open to engaging with you?
* **Set out a clear request** – Any minister or senior official will have a busy workload and competing priorities. Your request to meet, or for them to attend an event, should be clear, concise and specific. The details of what you want to talk about will depend on your context, for instance, is there a national guideline on healthcare facilities that needs revising? A budget line that needs funding? A training programme that needs improving?
* **Be flexible** – Given how busy ministers and officials are, it will help if you can offer a range of dates, or alternatives, such as a conference call instead of a meeting or a pre-recorded video message that can be shown an event.
* **Prepare for the meeting** – Once a date has been set, plan carefully. Have materials to give to them and agree an agenda beforehand. They may only have a short time to meet with you, so make the most of the time you have by providing your questions or key information in advance. If several of you are attending, decide beforehand who will take what role in the meeting. For example, you could allocate people to ask specific questions, and someone to introduce you all at the start and summarise at the end. It’s worth having someone to keep an eye on the time as well, to ensure you get through all your key questions.

**At the meeting**

* **Be positive** – Generally speaking, it is better to be constructive than confrontational. Health ministers or officials may be well aware of the problems in healthcare facilities, and may even already be undertaking work to improve conditions. So aim to be polite and constructive, emphasising that you are willing to work with them to improve the situation.
* **Be specific** – Remember that, in many cases, you may know more about the subject than the minister or their staff. At the meeting or event, be as specific as possible to avoid talking in generalities or receiving vague commitments.
* **Give examples** – Talk from your experience as a health worker about specific examples of health facilities where access to water, sanitation and hygiene is limited. What does this look like? How does it affect you and your patients? Photos or videos can help leave a lasting impression.
* **Offer solutions** – Avoid just stating the problem. To achieve change, it’s important to have specific actions that you want the minister or official to take. They may not agree with you straight away, but they’ll know what could be done. Provide a summary of recommendations, with timeframes.

**After the meeting**

* **Thank them** – Remember, even if they didn’t agree with you, they were willing to meet you and listen to your concerns. If you thank them, they are more likely to feel positive and appreciated, and be more likely to act.
* **Follow up** – Within a week, email or write to them to record what was said and agreed. Ask for an update on what they will do next and when.