Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Needs in Catholic Healthcare Facilities

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are essential for the delivery of safe, quality healthcare, yet these services are absent in thousands of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries, putting patients at greater risk of infection.

These gaps in the basics are a concern for healthcare facilities (HCF) in low-resource settings around the world. The Catholic Church is the largest unified healthcare provider in the world, and is therefore a critical partner to any effort to address these deficits.

In 2019, the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development recognized the important of WASH in HCF, and then in 2020 the Dicastery led an assessment to begin to understand the status of conditions. Dioceses, congregations, and Bishops' conferences responded to the call; 150 HCF in 23 countries participated in the first assessment of WASH in Catholic HCF, which found that:

- 63% of HCF lacked basic water services
- 90% of HCF lacked basic sanitation facilities
- 53% of HCF lacked basic hand hygiene services
- 15% of HCF expected women to bring their own water when they came to deliver their baby

In March 2021, the Dicastery's WASH in HCF Initiative was launched publicly, calling on Catholic partners around the world to help to strengthen capacity to meet international WASH standards and prevent further spread of COVID-19 and other diseases by improving conditions.

Partners such as **Catholic Health Association, Providence, Water Engineers for the Americas**, and **CRS** have supported the effort to address WASH needs in Catholic HCF.

We welcome members of the Parish Twinning Program for the Americas to join the Initiative! If you work with healthcare facilities, consider:

- Exploring with your local partners and conducting an assessment with the tools available.
- If you're ready to implement, seeking partnerships to provide technical expertise
- Have questions? Reach out to Mark Brinkmoeller: jmarkb@assisistrategy.com

For more information on the the issue visit *WASHinHCF.org* and to learn about the Dicastery's initiative go to: *https://www.humandevelopment.va/en/progetti/wash-water-sanitation-hygiene.html*