

Statement on agenda Item: 12.5

Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities

This is a statement by MMI supported by PHM and PSI.

Access to WASH is a human right. Adequate WASH in healthcare facilities provides patients and health workers with dignity and improves quality of care.

However, the role of cleaners in healthcare facilities is neglected. Despite the importance of cleaning and sanitation management for WASH, cleaners face lack of training, informal employment and poor working conditions, with exposure to hazardous materials including human waste and chemicals. They are often poorly paid and suffer insecurity of tenure. Neglecting cleaners hinders efforts in improving WASH.

Furthermore, privatization of healthcare facility WASH services is detrimental. Contracting arrangements under privatisation have led to cuts in numbers of cleaners, leaving other health-workers to undertake extra tasks. This causes delays in cleaning and care provision, harming patients.

Violation of cleaners' rights breaches international labour standards including ILO Convention 187 on OHS. We urge MS to ensure cleaners' access to adequate training, working and employment conditions, including decent wages. We urge WHO to formally recognise cleaning staff as part of the healthcare workforce and include them in the WHO Essential Environmental Health Standards in Health care. We urge MS to invest in publicly provided WASH services.

Total: 199 words

Statement to be read by: Ana Vracar

Contact (phone, e-mail): vracar.ana@gmail.com