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Diarrhea in Children and Sustainable Development Goal 6

Diarrhea is one of the leading causes of global under five childhood mortality and is responsible for mortality of around 5,25,000 children every year.¹ Each episode of diarrhea deprives the youngster of essential nutrients for growth, leading to malnutrition. Diarrhea is most commonly caused by contaminated food and water sources. Safe drinking water, better sanitation, hand washing with soap, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, and immunization help minimize the risk of diarrhea.¹

"Clean water and sanitation for all" is the 6th Global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6). For the years 2016-2030, UNICEF's global water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) strategy focuses on assisting governments in ensuring that every child has access to a basic level of WASH services.² Drinking water that is safe to drink, as well as sufficient sanitation and hygiene, are essential for maintaining health and well-being. Lack of access to appropriate sanitary facilities has a detrimental influence on children's health and well-being. Around 780 million people throughout the world do not have access to better drinking water, and 2.5 billion do not have access to improved sanitation.¹ Due to inadequate water and sanitation, over 53,000 Pakistani children under the age of five die each year from diarrhea.³ Children who have repeated episodes of diarrhea are more likely to lag behind in school or drop out entirely.⁴ In an analysis in the current issue of Pakistan Pediatric Journal, Bashir et al concluded that lack of toilet facilities and absence of soap has a bearing on the frequency of diarrhea.

SDG 6 provides a chance for Pakistan's Government to put its commitment to WASH into action and guarantee that everyone has adequate

and equitable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. This is also linked to the Government's "Clean and Green Pakistan" program, which is being carried out across the country.⁵ Schools serve a vital role in society. Improving WASH availability in schools can improve student health and attendance, resulting in better educational results for all. Educational institutions, mosques, and the media should all be used to raise awareness about the necessity of WASH.⁴ Creating awareness and turning it into action will ultimately lead to decrease in diarrheal diseases in children in Pakistan.

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