

Assessment of water quality surveillance activities in a MOH area: A case study from Bope-Poddala, Galle

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Water quality surveillance is a main strategy to ensure provision of safe water for public. Assessment of current water quality monitoring practices employed in MOH areas is particularly important to identify the gaps and to take mitigation measures further. This case study was performed to assess water quality surveillance activities in MOH area, Bope-Poddala in Galle district involving all range Public Health Inspectors (PHI's) in the MOH area. Government circulars and regulations were reviewed, and a data sheet was developed to assess logistical availability, process of sending samples and receiving reports and actions taken. There were four range PHIs within the MOH area, and registry of public water sources and maps were not available even with a single PHI. Altogether 47 water samples were collected throughout the year (11.7 per PHI) following routine random selection process. Except one sample, all others were collected from private water sources. Out of the 47, PHI's had sent all of those for bacteriological testing to the National Institute of Health Sciences but only three samples were subjected for chemical testing for selected ions. Reports had been received for all requested bacteriological tests. But none of the chemical test reports were received. Out of 47 samples, only 17 samples were positive for microbial tests, and in 15 instances, actions were taken against by the authorities. The PHI's were less equipped with necessary test kits whereas no one had chlorine checking kits. Practice of maintaining necessary records by them was not adequate. It was perceived that albeit poor facilities, PHI's were doing water sampling, testing and taking corrective measures to a certain extent, but not reaching the satisfactory level required for proper surveillance. It is recommended that PHI's should be motivated to practice proper surveillance through maintaining necessary documents.

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