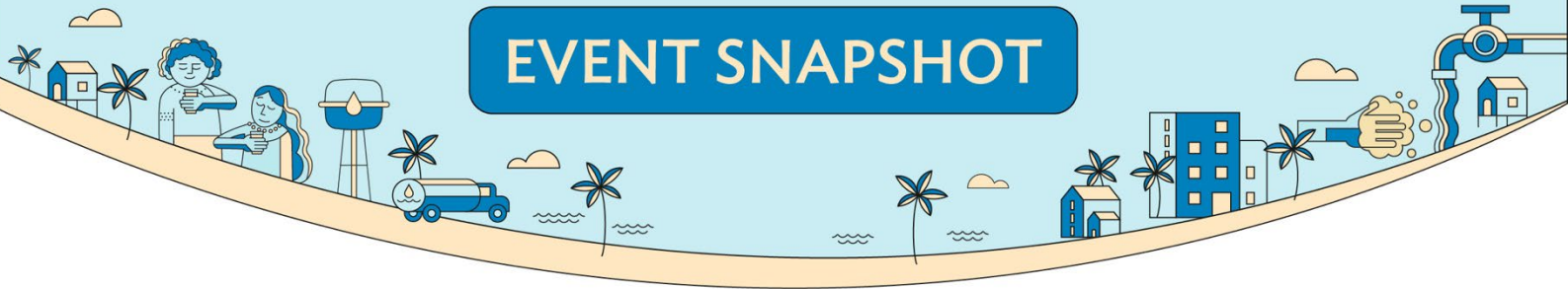


# EVENT SNAPSHOT



## EVENT DETAILS

**Celebrating Global Handwashing Day with water utilities in the Pacific**  
18 October 2023

### Speakers

**Honk Kiap**  
General Manager, Government & Community Relations  
Water PNG Limited

**Kencho Namgyal**  
Chief of WASH - Pacific  
UNICEF

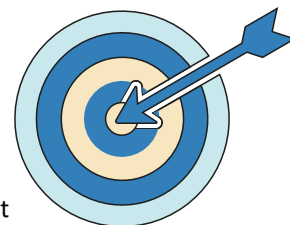
**Bronwyn Powell - Facilitator**  
Team Leader and WASH Advisor  
Asian Development Bank, Australia

Event recording and resources available [here](#).

Water utilities play an important role in the provision of water services which make handwashing with soap possible. This webinar celebrated Global Handwashing Day and explored the role of utilities in scaling up water services and supporting hand hygiene campaigns in the Pacific. It marked progress achieved in improving hand hygiene across the region, and identified the remaining challenges and gaps in increasing water access and promoting hand hygiene.

### Webinar Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic helped boost efforts to promote handwashing with soap around the world. This Global Handwashing Day we recognized the increased commitment and action that has been made in recent years, while acknowledging the need for a more collective effort to ensure hand hygiene remains on the agenda and targets are met.



The ADB Pacific WASH Technical Assistance (REG TA-6551), in association with the Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (PWWA), hosted a special Global Handwashing Day panel discussion to explore how water utilities were tackling the challenges of sustaining water supply to the urban and peri-urban communities they serve and working in partnership with others to support improved hand hygiene behaviors. The webinar highlighted how Water PNG Limited is piloting different models to service informal settlement communities and innovations to tackle non-revenue water. Water PNG also shared their current communication campaign being developed in partnership with ADB. The event was attended by 36 participants, including 25 from 7 Pacific countries.

### The webinar explored several key topics:

- Global Handwashing Day and the current status of hand hygiene in the Pacific
- Pacific utility experiences in scaling up water services, tackling non-revenue water and supporting hand hygiene campaigns
- The way forward to sustain and improve hand hygiene efforts in the Pacific

### Handwashing in the Pacific

In an interactive poll during the webinar, participants unanimously agreed that everyone has a role to play to support handwashing with soap. Kencho Namgyal, UNICEF Chief of WASH in the Pacific, presented an overview of handwashing in the Pacific using the 2022 [WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for WASH \(JMP\)](#) data. There are three key elements needed for people to be able to wash their hands effectively: access to handwashing facilities with water, access to soap, and practicing correct handwashing behaviors. In over 18 Pacific Island Countries (PICs), more than 1 in 3 households are served by utilities, representing approximately 54% of the Pacific population (excluding PNG) (WHO/UNICEF, 2022; PWWA Benchmarking Report, 2021). Water utilities play a central role in hand hygiene through the delivery of water.



Image 1: Global Handwashing Day Celebrations in Yap, Federated States of Micronesia (Source: ADB)

Utilities are also well positioned to promote hygiene awareness campaigns. There remains a large disparity in water access between rural and urban areas in PICs. Global Handwashing Day celebrations often focus on promoting handwashing in schools, and it is evident that schools with water provided by utilities generally have a more reliable water supply to enable handwashing. Promoting handwashing behaviors in schools can lead children to adopt healthy habits early, bring messages back to their community and home settings, and support intergenerational change.

### Case Study: Papua New Guinea

**PNG's commitment to WASH is underpinned by the Papua New Guinea National WASH Policy (2015-2030).** The policy aims to support national access to improved water and safe sanitation across the country to increase peoples' quality of life in both rural and urban areas. The recent merger of Water PNG and Eda Ranu puts Water PNG Limited as the single entity mandated to serve affordable water and sewage services to all centers in the country. Supplying water to informal settlement communities remains a significant challenge in PNG, but as Mr Honk Kiap explained, Water PNG recognizes that they have a responsibility to help achieve the targets of the National WASH policy, delivering water to those not yet served, while achieving their corporate revenue raising objectives. Innovative water supply systems, including water vendors and meter farming, are being trialed in settlements to find new ways to ensure the networked water supply is available to everyone. Community engagement to tackle non-revenue water – particularly illegal connections, leaks and bill payment, and promote connecting to the networked system is ongoing. Many households don't realize the current water tariff for the networked system is far cheaper than buying containers of water. In partnership with ADB, Water PNG has developed the Waterwise Wantok campaign. This behavior change campaign tackles non-revenue water and hand hygiene by interlinking messages on bill payment, reporting water main leaks and promoting handwashing. The campaign is currently in production and due to be released across national broadcasting channels in late 2023. Pilot engagement with schools and communities in settlements near Port Moresby will follow.

#### Clean hands are within reach!

Global Handwashing Day is not a once in a year event, we must remember to wash our hands every day at critical times, including before cooking or eating, and after going to the toilet. Clean hands are within reach, but we need a greater sustained effort for all settings – home, communities, workplaces, schools and health centres, to ensure momentum for hand hygiene continues beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) are responsible for the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), which has reported country, regional and global estimates of progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) since 1990. The Programme's vision is the progressive realization of universal access to WASH and the reduction of inequalities in service levels by 2030. Its mission is to produce reliable estimates of national, regional and global progress on WASH to inform decision making by government, donor and civil society organizations. [Read more here.](#)

## Learning Snapshots

- *There are 12 countries in the Pacific (out of 21) with data on safely managed drinking water services and eight countries with reporting data on access to a handwashing facility at home. Excluding PNG, 54% of the Pacific population is served by water utilities.*
- *The COVID-19 pandemic boosted efforts to promote handwashing with soap, however we are already seeing behavior slumping and handwashing facilities falling into disrepair—efforts are needed to sustain focus on hand hygiene.*
- *We can't wash our hands without access to reliable, safe and affordable water. Reliable access remains out of reach for millions of people across the Pacific.*
- *Water utilities are grappling with significant challenges in ensuring sufficient and continuous supply to communities. Clean hands are within reach, but it will take everyone, including water utilities, to achieve this.*

## Upcoming Events



### 29 November 2023 – Harnessing digital technologies to improve water utility performance.

To register your interest for future 2024 Webinars, please contact: [lfernando@adb.org](mailto:lfernando@adb.org).

Past ADB Pacific WASH webinars can be accessed here: [Pacific WASH Webinars](#)

**ADB continues to support government and water service providers in the region to build resilience, capacity and knowledge to manage threats in our changing world.**