EVENT SNAPSHOT

Pacific WASH Webinars

Pacific nations are particularly vulnerable to the social and public health effects of COVID-19. The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Pacific WASH Technical Advisory Team is supporting the region's water authorities to review or develop their pandemic response plans as key front-line organizations in the fight against the disease.

Workshop Overview

Early in 2020, the ADB announced its intention to support the Asia Pacific region in its response to the pandemic. In November 2020, the ADB ran a virtual workshop in association with the Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (PWWA) with 30 participants from 11 water authorities across the Pacific region. The workshop reviewed the status of pandemic planning, reviewed current pandemic planning processes, and highlighted practical steps to manage the pandemic.

The workshop responded to these key questions:

❖ What do we need to do if COVID-19 is present?
❖ Who is in charge of responding?
❖ What are the response stages?
❖ Who is doing what and when?

TA 6551 *Strengthening WASH Practices and Hygiene Behavioral Change in the Pacific*

Workshop Outputs

Pandemic Planning Overview

Each step requires a plan of its own, an escalation process and assigned organizational responsibilities.

Source: Solomon Water COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan

Case studies

Workshop participants shared their response to pandemic planning. The **Majuro Water and Sewer Company (Marshall Islands)** has adopted an 8-step process to manage the pandemic. The process includes *practical guidelines* for facility disinfection, management of spare and supplies and employee protection, *support services* including splitting teams, mental health support and organisation communication and *risk management* including an alert and escalation process. **Maynilad Water Services (Philippines)** has responded to the pandemic by intensifying its public handwashing campaign and donating wash stations in key public areas. **Solomon Water (Solomon Islands) and Niue** shared COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plans that both countries have used to manage the pandemic.

Learning Snapshots

- **Planning counts.** Having a clear pandemic plan in place will reduce business disruption and help to maintain revenue and business as usual.

- **Communicate early and often.** Practical measures to control the pandemic and the responsibilities of staff need to be communicated throughout the plan roll-out.

- **Understanding government's role and response** in facilitating the utility's ability to respond to critical services is key. Good coordination helps ensure uninterrupted supply of water and sanitation services.

- **Under worst case scenario,** continued delivery of water services is imperative to combat the impacts of the pandemic. Cashflow should not prohibit utilities from performing this critical role.

- **Be decisive but flexible and agile.** The pandemic plan may need to change as new and unforeseen challenges emerge and senior management must be alert to new threats.

- **Staff support is critical.** Staff are the frontline to manage the pandemic and must adopt COVID-19 safe working practices to keep other staff members, their families and the public safe.

Upcoming Events

To register for the upcoming 2021 webinar topics, please contact: llfernando@adb.org

Topic	Month (2021)
Water and public health	May
Chlorine disinfection	June
Affordable water services	July
Access to water and gender issues	August
Non-revenue water	September
Organisational culture	October

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