

EVENT SNAPSHOT

World Water Week at Home – Achieving Water Security and Resilience in Asia Pacific: AWDO 2020

Event Details

Date and Time
26 August, 2:00–2:45 p.m.

Venue
Zoom

Related water subthemes

x	Water supply, sanitation, and wastewater	x	Flood/drought risk management and disaster resilience
x	Irrigation and productivity	x	Water governance and finance
x	IWRM, storage, water-food-energy nexus	x	Water and health

Adapting to the new normal, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) has transformed the annual [World Water Week](#) (WWWeek) in Stockholm into a virtual conference, dubbed WWWeek at Home. Held on 24 to 28 August, the theme this year was “Water and Climate Change: Accelerating Action” with a focus on innovation, science, and actions needed to tackle one of the planet’s greatest threats.

As in previous years, ADB participated in this year’s conference, organizing a session called, [Achieving Water Security and Resilience in Asia Pacific: AWDO 2020](#). This follows a year of research, development, and consultations for the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO) 2020, including last year’s session at WWWeek 2019.

AWDO 2020 is the fourth edition of this flagship publication from the ADB Water Sector Group, and it is set to be released soon.

The session, which gathered close to 200 participants from around the world, shared the latest water security findings and recommendations based on the five key dimensions (KDs) of AWDO: (i) rural household water security (KD1), (ii) economic water security (KD2); (iii) urban water security (KD3); (iv) environmental water security (KD4); and, water-related disaster security (KD5). Governance and finance in the context of water security policy-making – which will form a new section in the upcoming AWDO for the first time – were also discussed, as well as highlights from the Karnataka experience of applying AWDO into practice. Karnataka in India is one of the four country case studies to be featured in AWDO 2020, along with the People’s Republic of China, Thailand, and Timor-Leste.

Partner organizations who contributed to this new AWDO edition presented their work and framed the discussion. These include the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Water Partnership, International Water Centre, Griffith University, University of Queensland, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Key Takeaways

As a flagship publication, AWDO has been showing the progress of achieving water security in Asia and the Pacific through the years. The first edition of AWDO was released in 2007, and with subsequent editions in 2013, 2016, and the upcoming 2020 publication. The latest version will have five new features: an improved methodology, new sections on finance and governance (supported by OECD), country case studies, a future risk framework, and a living AWDO website. Overall, there has been a positive trend among ADB developing member countries (DMCs), improving from a nascent and engaged rating to the capable and effective rating.

A holistic systems strengthening approach is needed to improve rural household water security, especially since this KD pertains to “for all” of SDG 6. This includes better engagement of vulnerable groups and implementing locally appropriate solutions, said Mark Pascoe of the International Water Centre. Most of the countries that have regressed in KD1 are those in the Pacific.

Despite major investments, the level of urban water security has remained relatively the same from 2013 to 2020 due to urbanization. In total, 600 million urban people still do not have adequate access to water supply and sanitation services. Similar to KD1, the Pacific requires increased attention and support; also for South Asia in terms of providing affordable water supply. Wastewater, stormwater, and rainwater could be a potential resource. Meanwhile, to prepare for future risks, issues such as urban growth, nonrevenue water, water consumption, and energy use costs, should be managed.

Unsurprisingly, the most advanced economies have achieved the most water security, but this doesn’t mean they should relax. Economic water security is a result of years of planning and prioritizing policies. According to IWMI’s Dave Wiberg, the most improved “award” goes to East Asia, having benefitted from decades of policy and investment on water and food security. Some DMCs in Central Asia, such as Kazakhstan, have also benefitted from infrastructure investments that mitigate lower natural water availability.

“You cannot manage what you cannot measure.”

**— Maria Salvetti, OECD,
on the importance of addressing data gaps
to improve services and policies**

Achieving water security requires robust public policies across all levels of government, a clear allocation of duties among responsible authorities, and regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Although water policy frameworks and coordination mechanisms are in place in most countries, the limited adoption of water policy tools (notably water allocation regime) and economic instruments (such as abstraction and pollution charges) represents a threat to water security especially in areas where water stress is deemed to increase. Adopting robust policy tools and improving water data and information are key to strengthen water-related policies implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Most countries will need to invest 1%–2% of GDP in water supply and sanitation infrastructure from 2015 to 2030. Investments in irrigation expansion and modernization and in flood protection are

projected to rise and need to be financed as well. While better use could be made of existing assets and sources of finance, there is a need to harness additional sources of finance, said OECD's Xavier Leflaive. Official development assistance, which remains a comparatively low share of investment in water infrastructure, has a catalytic role to play. One of the recommendations is to engage with communities more to show how water-related investments (and fees paid by households and users) contribute to better service. Tariffs, a source of funding, are still under-utilized.

AWDO is a model of cooperation, combining academic rigor with partnership that produces tangible results. Ravi Narayanan of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum highlighted how AWDO has impacted policy and practice as evidenced by the country case studies, such as in Karnataka, India. According to P.S. Rao of the Advanced Centre for Integrated Water Resources Management, the water security index helped shape the state's new water policy and has galvanized agencies and departments around integrated water resources management. AWDO is an instrumental tool for a region that is striving for water security and one that is severely impacted by climate change-induced water-related disasters.

“This has been a result of cooperation between partners, all combining to do a fantastic exercise, truly SDG 17 for SDG 6.”

— Ravi Narayanan, Asia-Pacific Water Forum

About the Speakers



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Mr. Mark Pascoe
Chief Executive Officer, International Water Centre



Mr. David Wiberg
Hydro Informatics Leader, International Water Management Institute (IWMI)



Mr. Michael Bak
Adjunct Researcher, Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building
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Mr. Xavier Leflaive
Principal Administrator, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and
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Ms. Maria Salvetti
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Mr. P.S. Rao
Director (Technical), Advanced Centre for Integrated Water Resources
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Mr. Ravi Narayanan
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