



Quality Assurance in COVID-19 Crisis Response: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

What are the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis impact water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) management?

While there have been no reports of the survival of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in drinking-water or sewage to date, and also no reports about respective transmission risks, the present COVID-19 crisis has still considerable effects on the water sector, especially in the ADC partner countries.

- **The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic conditions is essential** for protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19.
- **Frequent and correct hand hygiene is one of the most important measures to prevent infection with the coronavirus.** However, in many low- and middle-income countries, high numbers of people do not have soap and water to wash their hands. This creates a higher risk of illnesses and diseases spreading.
- **If the COVID-19 outbreak takes hold in low- and middle-income countries with limited water, sanitation and hygiene services,** and where healthcare facilities and people are far less equipped to control or treat infections, the consequences could be immense.
- **Water utility operators in many countries are facing different sorts of difficulties:**
 - Some operators report massive reduction of income due to:
 - (i) commercial/industrial customers that can no longer afford to pay the water/sewerage fee as they too have lost their income during the crisis and
 - (ii) insufficient collection of fees as in some communities they are collected by staff through house visits or have to be paid by the customers at the bank.
 - Maintenance measures must be postponed due to curfews and/or lack of protective equipment.

What measures can we take to ensure adequate consideration of WASH into response efforts?

- Encourage consistently applied hygiene and waste management practices in communities, homes, schools, marketplaces, and healthcare facilities which will help prevent human-to-human transmission.
- Use on-going WASH programmes as entry points to incorporate COVID-19 preparedness and response activities.
- Support partners to enable more frequent and regular hand hygiene by improving access to hand hygiene facilities and using multimodal approaches to support good hand hygiene behaviour.
- Advocate with lead sector ministry/departments in partner countries to develop WASH sector preparedness and response plan.
- Ensure that all WASH related activities are coordinated across sectors with all relevant national authorities (ministries of health, agriculture, public works, environment, social protection, education, etc.), and key stakeholders at national, district and local level.
- Support water and sanitation authorities and utilities to ensure business continuity and warrant a high quality of water and sanitation services to avoid deterioration or collapse of essential public services as a secondary effect of outbreak.

Some key resources:

[WHO Technical Brief on WASH and COVID-19](#)

[Global WASH Cluster COVID-19 Resources](#)