

Special Webinar Series on COVID-19 & Water, sanitation and hygiene

Rationale & Structure of the Special Webinar Series

In March 2020, SWA organised a [webinar](#) on “COVID-19 and WASH” with presentations by UNICEF and WHO and interventions from partner countries. The webinar was attended by over 1600 participants and focused on the link between COVID-19 and WASH. Building on this, SWA is organising a series of additional dialogues.

The series seeks to achieve a balance between quick turnaround times to take into account the urgency of the Covid-19 emergency, **reliability, accuracy and timeliness of information** being shared, **applicability** of findings and approaches from one setting to another and the **participation of key political leaders and decision-makers**. Additional webinars may be added on demand.

Key links between COVID-19 and WASH will be explored over the coming few weeks to:

- Enable WASH systems to be more effective tools in the fight against COVID-19;
- Ensure that WASH systems are further strengthened to provide services during COVID-19;
- Empower systems to contribute to post-emergency recovery and prepare for future pandemics.

The **webinar series will consist of:**

- 1 **Global high-level webinar**, with Ministerial-level interventions on political prioritisation of WASH in times of COVID-19, and on traditional and innovative financing schemes. This will be organised as a single webinar across different languages and geographical zones.
- 3 **Thematic webinars on specific topics** – eliminating inequalities in the COVID-19 response; service provision and availability during the COVID-19 emergency; and the role of partners in the recovery phase. These will be organised in the traditional format for SWA webinars.

Apr. 9

Political & financial priority for WASH in times of COVID-19

The webinar will bring together Ministers responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene and finance to highlight why the COVID response must also be a water, sanitation and hygiene response and the steps governments are taking to ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene is a high political priority in the times of COVID-19. Discussions will also consider how this political priority is translated into action on sector finance – that is, governments continue to invest in water, sanitation and hygiene, international partners’ financial efforts to tackling COVID-19 target water, sanitation and hygiene and additional financing is mobilized.

Apr. 23

Eliminating inequalities in the WASH response to COVID-19

The webinar will consider the steps to make sure that WASH services, key to preventing the spread of COVID-19, are made available to groups that are most vulnerable to the spread of the virus. Examples include models that remove cost barriers to WASH services and specific actions targeting vulnerable groups.

May 6

Ensuring WASH service provision in times of COVID-19

The webinar will consider how to ensure services continue to be provided uninterrupted and are also extended to excluded areas and populations. Participants will discuss ways to support service providers to fulfil their functions.

TBC

Sustaining WASH gains beyond the COVID-19 emergency

A resilient WASH sector is important to mitigate the longer-term consequences of the pandemic. Moreover, learnings from the current response should help prepare for future pandemics. This webinar will be organised at a time when countries are transitioning to the recovery phase, and consider preparation of the WASH sector, both to mitigate effects of the current pandemic and prepare for future ones.



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COVID-19, Water, sanitation and hygiene, & SWA

The close association between water, sanitation and hygiene and health is not a new message. Water, sanitation and hygiene have been protecting populations from infections for centuries. But even in 2020, 40% of the global population lives without basic handwashing facilities with soap and water at home. 1 out of 6 healthcare facilities have no hygiene services, lacking even the most basic hand-hygiene facilities. Moreover, we now remember that a society is only as healthy as its most vulnerable members, and that one person's ill-health has consequences for everybody's health.

Containment and response plans must prioritize investments and efforts for water, sanitation and hygiene. Just as importantly, after the emergency subsides, countries must put in place strong strategies, budgets, policies and systems that ensure the safe and sustainable provision of those services for everyone. **Water, sanitation and hygiene must be available to everyone**, taking special care of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged – the elderly, the disabled, those living in precarious situations like informal settlements and refugee camps and the homeless.

SWA is playing a constructive role to support partners' access to information, help find solutions, and advocate for sustainable national responses that include vulnerable groups. **This role goes well beyond the immediate response** – a robust WASH sector is important to mitigating the longer-term consequences of the pandemic. Likewise, besides mobilising the financial resources needed to address the pandemic in the current emergency, work will be needed to make financing instruments available for strengthening preparedness and response to future pandemics.

SWA is taking the following support actions to help partners respond to COVID-19:

- SWA is a platform for clear and accurate information from partners who are leading international support, as well as those who lead national responses.
- SWA accommodates discussions – political, strategic, technical and financial – on partners' approaches to tackling the emergency, and how partners are using their multi-stakeholder platforms to strengthen preparedness, response and coordination.
- SWA is an exchange platform for ideas and responses to critical aspects of the pandemic: Mitigation of the impact on water, sanitation and hygiene systems; Access to financing instruments to strengthen preparedness and the response; Implications for services; etc.
- By putting a spotlight on the vulnerable, SWA provides a voice for sustaining and expanding services to ensure no one is left behind.

To support the above, **SWA is mobilising its well-established tools**, notably: Webinars for expert and peer exchange; High-level national and international dialogues to share practices and experiences; and Mobilization of expertise on specific discussions.

If your organization would like to share information during any of the webinars, please contact us at: webinars@sanitationandwaterforall.org