

Webinar

# COVID-19 Pandemic and WASH

## From Response to Resilience

3rd July 2020



WASH Governance Hub



# Introduction and Context

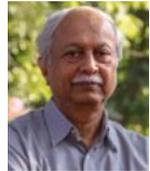
The health emergency caused by COVID-19 has affected all countries in varying degrees. Considering that washing hands with soap and clean water is one of the most efficient ways of infection prevention, many countries have implemented a set of measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis in relation to water, sanitation, and hygiene services (WASH). Implementing these measures require political will at the highest level and the committed participation of stakeholders at all levels. The extent of this pandemic touches particularly the most vulnerable sections of the population which might already be suffering from the deprivation of these services. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6.1 and 6.2 – universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all – is now more important than ever.

In face of this situation, the WASH Governance Hub (WSGH) initiated discussions about good practices and challenges based on the combined experience of the partners.

The webinar captured the experiences on how WASH has played a significant role in helping local governments and communities in dealing with the pandemic. The discussion also focused on the importance of building resilience by strengthening local governments and communities to address such challenges in future.

# Panellists and Attendees

## Moderated by



**Dinesh Mehta**  
Executive director  
CWAS-CRDF-CEPT

**Presentation:** Global COVID WASH response: overview and main challenges



**Alejandro Jiménez**  
Director, Water and sanitation  
SIWI

## Panellists



**Sheela Patel**  
Director  
SPARC



**Sujoy Mojumdar**  
WASH specialist  
UNICEF India



**Meera Mehta**  
Executive director  
CWAS-CRDF-CEPT



**Marije Broekhuijsen**  
WASH specialist  
UNICEF India



**Depinder Kapur**  
Expert and team lead  
NIUA

## Attendees

**350+**  
**Registrations**

Participants from various national and international organizations, joined the webinar.

Participation from:

- Government agencies
- Development agencies
- Non-profits
- Research organizations
- Academicians
- Students

# Overview of COVID-19 WASH Response - Global Mapping

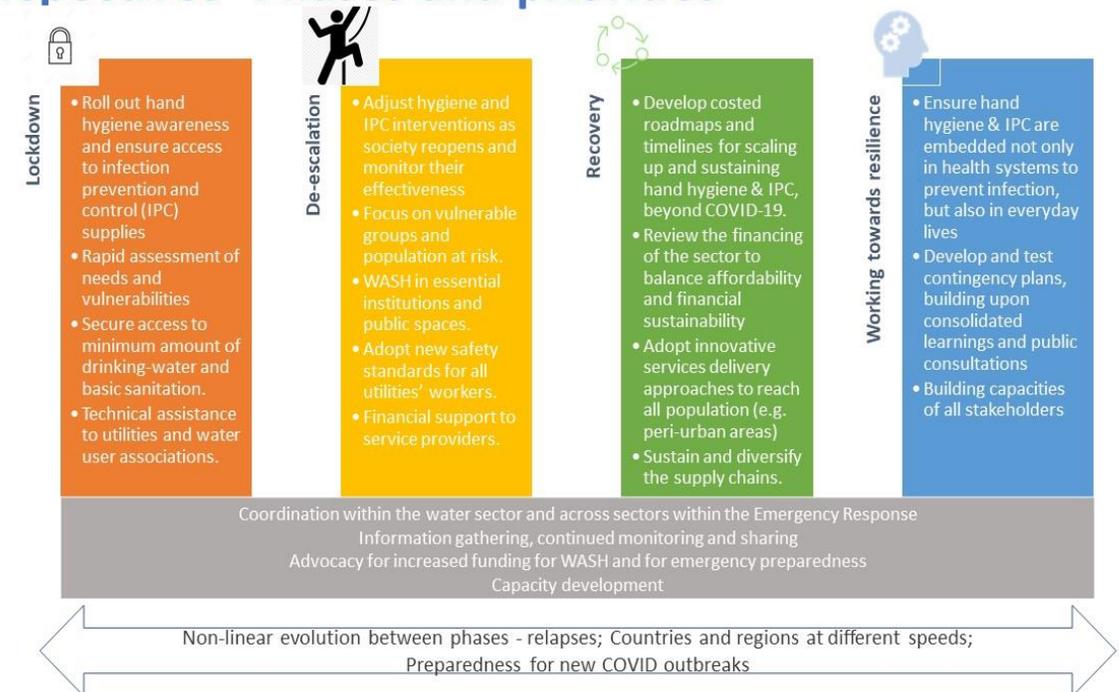
- SIWI supported by UNICEF has been [mapping public policy WASH response during the lockdown phase of COVID-19 pandemic in 80 countries](#) from different regions.
- The mapping was done across 5 pillars and 45 different activities. Five pillars are: awareness raising campaigns for handwashing, strengthen infection prevention and control (IPC), meet basic WASH needs of all people including the most vulnerable, continuity and safety of water and sanitation services and technical and financials support to utilities.
- Key findings of the study include: Main efforts have been in handwashing and IPC, exceptional measures to ensure access to water and sanitation, water service providers are essential workers, limited attention to sanitation, measures have been more for urban areas than rural and limited financial and technical support to service providers.
- As the COVID – 19 pandemic is evolving in different regions, there is a need to ensure that service providers are able to make improvement in service delivery during various phases, and work towards resilience.



Alejandro Jiménez, SIWI

*“The Matrix has been used to hold discussions and prepare notes explaining examples, challenges and results of the frameworks for global dissemination.”*

## Perspectives- Phases and priorities



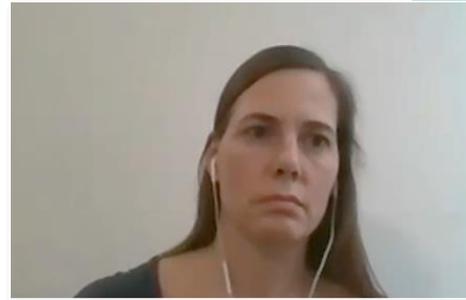
# COVID-19 and UNICEF – WASH Response Overview in India

- Using advocacy as a tool to promote awareness about the importance of handwashing, UNICEF along with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Jal Shakti prepared advisories on handwashing. They used celebrity endorsements and other social media platforms to roll out the advisory quickly and effectively.
- Understanding gaps in availability of handwashing facilities especially in public spaces such as markets, bus stands and offices. A handbook on handwashing stations with locally sourced materials was prepared and disseminated in 6000 blocks across the country.
- UNICEF also worked jointly with the local governments in slums and response for addressing the migrant crisis.
- It supported municipalities with assessment and planning, technical assistance, capacity development, and coordination and leveraging.
- Online capacity building and training programmes were conducted for stakeholders to ensure their safety as they provide essential services.



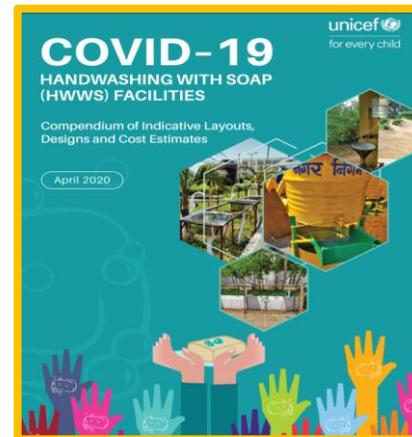
Sujoy Mojumdar, UNICEF India

*“Working with state and central governments to continue WASH services through guidelines and advisories ensuring the safety of various service providers.”*



Marije Broekhuijsen, UNICEF India

*“Understanding the context, issues and needs is important to be able to leverage others into bringing in resources to effectively provide WASH facilities in slum areas.”*



# COVID-19 WASH and Urban Poor, Informal Settlements

- Observing the WASH sector through the lens of the urban poor, it is seen that they face severe gaps for of access to water and sanitation services.
- COVID-19 has refocused the attention on the inequality of WASH service provision. The poor are most vulnerable as they have no water for hand washing and have to use community toilets that are inadequate.



Sheela Patel, SPARC

*“Provision of basic amenities and facilities to the poor represents good governances. So there is a need to address this huge deficit in governance in large as well as small cities.”*

## Moving Forward from COVID-19 Response to Resilience in WASH

- Beyond the COVID-19 response, it is important to ensure that cities become resilient. There is a need to focus on strengthening of urban local governments, in terms of financial capacities, institutional capacities and improving service delivery models.
- Under the National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Alliance (NFSSM), its Municipal Strengthening Taskforce is working to make cities resilient to ensure inclusive and sustainable services.
- For institutional strengthening, it is important to focus on monitoring service provision and leveraging data to make informed decisions about resource allocations for services .



Meera Mehta, CWAS – CRDF

*“For local governments to ensure sustainability of their services, they must have financial resilience. Currently though 60% of GDP is generated in cities, less than 1% of the total government expenditure is spent by municipalities for cities.”*

# Urban Sanitation and COVID-19, A Response-Resilience Framework

- NIUA is engaged in response and resilience work, particularly focused on the safety of sanitation workers.
- The response included preparation of an e-resource book on urban sanitation, building capacities through training and workshops, and advocacy through webinars.
- An Urban Resilience Framework is developed based on how cities were responding to the crisis on-ground. It is based on practical experience in three parameters – timeliness, appropriateness and effectiveness.



Depinder Kapur, NIUA

*“The appropriateness parameter of the framework looks at the service coverage in critical areas and the co-ordination mechanism for strategic deployment of workers rather than focusing only on innovation.”*

## Discussions: Question and Answer Session

### The better performing countries and how have they managed

Many countries have announced policies, but implementation is very important.

Columbia, Latin America started doing exceptional work in testing along with improving provisions for water and sanitation services. Many utilities in Latin America and Africa have waived water charges during the pandemic.



### How does behaviour change happen for hand washing and hygiene?

There has to be a push for behaviour change. Handwashing initiative has been launched globally by WHO and UNICEF to encourage the governments. Now there is a need for investments in such initiatives.

Fear is also a strong instrument but whether it will sustain is another challenge.

# Key Takeaways

## Sustaining hand washing facilities

There has to be a strong push to ensure the habit is sustained. Globally the hand-washing initiative is drawing attention of governments and investments are being made. There is a strong need for hygiene advocacy and behaviour change to ensure that hand washing is sustained in post-COVID situation.

## Making cities resilient by strengthening local governments, service providers and water-sanitation workers

It is important to look beyond just response and ensure that cities and local governments are resilient to further shocks. This can be done only through system strengthening especially of local government finances, building institutional capacities and improving the service delivery models to create a long term sustainable enabling environments for urban local governments. Measures to strengthen must also focus on frontline water and sanitation workers.

## Addressing the gaps and making WASH services accessible to all

Numerous government programmes have brought attention to the WASH sector like Swachh Bharat Mission and the Jal Jeevan Mission in India. Still there are gaps that need to be addressed. These gaps can be met through partnerships and working together across levels of governments, moving from global to local to ensure that critical WASH services are accessible to all.

