



**THE WORLD BANK**



---

# **COVID-19 Impacts on Water & Sanitation Utilities**

**Moving from emergency response to resilience**

21st April 2020 | Water & WASH Futures 2021

**Yang Villa**

Head of the Philippines, Isle Utilities

# Consolidating Knowledge on COVID-19 and Water Utilities



## **ADB Guidance Note on COVID-19 and the Water Sector in Asia and the Pacific**

*To be published in June 2021*

[www.adb.org/documents/series/covid-19-asia-pacific-guidance-notes](http://www.adb.org/documents/series/covid-19-asia-pacific-guidance-notes)



## **Utility of the Future (UoF) Program**

[www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/utility-of-the-future](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/utility-of-the-future)



## **Water Action Platform**

*Formerly the COVID-19 Response Group*

[www.wateractionplatform.com/](http://www.wateractionplatform.com/)

---

# Overview of Utility Impacts and Responses

**Commercial  
Operations**

**Technical  
Operations**

**Financial  
Management**

**Human Resources  
Management**

**Organization and  
Strategy**

**Commercial Operations**

Technical Operations

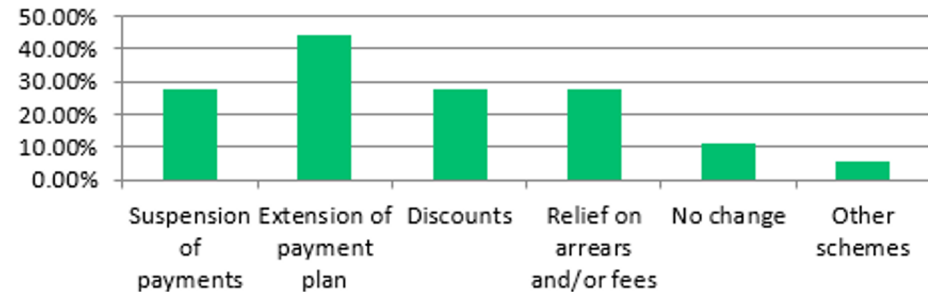
Financial Management

Human Resources Management

Organization and Strategy

- Many governments prohibited shut-offs and water rate increases
- Meter reading and billing were suspended during lockdown
- Customer service shifted to virtual/telephone interaction

Pricing schemes implemented by ADB survey respondents



**Key vulnerabilities:** ability to bill and collect payments to meet revenue requirements

Commercial  
Operations

**Technical  
Operations**

Financial  
Management

Human Resources  
Management

Organization and  
Strategy

- Water demand: increase among households, decrease among commercial/industrial customers
- Issues regarding workers, construction, supply chain
- Impetus for adoption of digital and other advanced technologies

### Changes in wastewater discharge observed by ADB survey respondents

	No change	Increase	Decrease	No observation	Total responses
Domestic/household discharges	38%	25%	13%	25%	8
Commercial/industrial discharges	25%	13%	38%	25%	8

**Key vulnerabilities:** ensuring continuous operations; manual/labor-intensive operations

Commercial  
Operations

Technical  
Operations

**Financial  
Management**

Human Resources  
Management

Organization and  
Strategy

- Impact on net revenue depends on customer mix and tariff structure
- Prolonged revenue decline (and operating cost increase) impacts capital expenditure
- Some had direct government support; others relied on their contingency funds

### Revenue impacts among ADB survey respondents

	No change	Increase	Decrease	Total responses
<b>Water Supply</b>				
Domestic/household revenues	39%	44%	17%	18
Commercial/industrial revenues	28%	6%	67%	18
<b>Sanitation and Wastewater</b>				
Domestic/household revenues	57%	14%	14%	6
Commercial/industrial revenues	43%	14%	29%	6

**Key vulnerabilities:** liquidity; lack of external funding support

Commercial  
Operations

Technical  
Operations

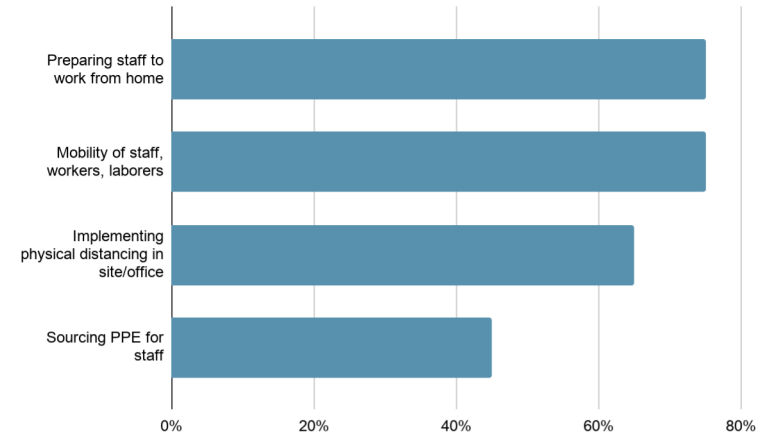
Financial  
Management

**Human Resources  
Management**

Organization and  
Strategy

- Need to maintain critical field/site operations
- Ensure safety of employees

### Challenges faced by ADB survey respondents



**Key vulnerabilities:** shifting to digital work; balance between staff safety and service delivery

Commercial  
Operations

Technical  
Operations

Financial  
Management

Human Resources  
Management

Organization and  
Strategy

- Many utilities have a business continuity plan in place
- Adopt pandemic response measures as business-as-usual (“new normal”)
- Vulnerability assessment of at-risk groups is not common

#### Vulnerability assessments conducted by ADB survey respondents

Vulnerable groups	Response rate
Informal settlements	11%
Homeless people	6%
Prisons	17%
Elderly	6%
Remote or rural communities	17%
Poor households	33%
Women-headed households	0%
Women and girls	0%
No assessment made	61%

**Key vulnerabilities:** embedding vulnerability assessment and resilience in organizational strategy