

Climate Resilient Pathways

Thematic Session: Strengthening multi-sectoral engagement and advocacy in water

Security as a key determinant of resilience

Convened by the Pacific Community in collaboration with the World Bank, the Pacific Water Security Technical Working Group and UNICEF Pacific.

Key Highlights of the session

The session was convened with a distinguished panel of speakers from the Pacific Water Security Technical Working Group, representing diverse voices that included UNICEF Pacific, the Pacific Community (SPC), the World Bank, the Pacific Association of Non-Government Organizations (PIANGO), and Water Aid PNG.

The discussion underscored the critical importance of accelerating action to fast-track progress towards achieving SDG 6, the crucial importance of strengthening multi-sectoral engagement on water security as a key determinant of resilience, recognizing the pivotal role of civil society organizations in contributing to inclusive transformative changes in communities, the importance of collecting water security evidence based surveys/research to understand household and individual experiences related to water access, reliability and use and the vital importance of strengthening water security engagement in the health sector in protecting public health.

Key messages from the session are;

- The 2023 Joint Monitoring Program Progress Report on SDG 6 shows the Pacific islands sub-region is not on track to achieve universal access to basic drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services by 2030.
- Coverage with basic sanitation is low and declining
- Almost **four out of ten people** in the Pacific islands do not yet have access to basic drinking water services.
- Significant acceleration is required across the Pacific to meet the SDG target of basic drinking water services by 2030.
- A 10x increase in current rates of progress and commitments is necessary to achieve global SDG targets by 2030.
- Significant disparities between and within countries and between urban/rural -main island and outer island exist, and more efforts are needed to close the inequities
- Water Security is the key connector to all sectors, requiring genuine, meaningful engagement in water security.
- The Pacific Resilience Partnership recognizes this need and has thus established a multi-sectoral PRP Water Security Technical Working Group that has developed a Pasifika Water Security Engagement Strategy to strengthen engagement in water security across sectors. A key aspect of this work has been the development of a Pacific definition for water security by the working group as “**Ability of Pacific communities to protect and sustainably manage their water resources, whilst**

maintaining access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all and managing the water-related risks of disasters and climate change to support a healthy, prosperous and resilient Pacific.

- Current efforts to strengthen water security engagement include the call by Pacific Water and Wastewater Ministers to elevate water security to the forum leaders meeting, which the Government of Solomon Islands has offered to champion in the 54th meeting in Honiara.
- The Pacific Water and Wastewater Association is a key partner championing water security through its work with water utilities, hence the importance of the role of water utilities was highlighted as crucial to achieving SDG 6.
- It is important to conduct evidence-based research and surveys to understand the causes of water insecurity, the state of water insecurity, and the consequences of water insecurity based on findings from a World Bank mobile survey conducted in PNG and Fiji.
- The need to balance water security data not just on access to infrastructure or service, but also on people's experience of water insecurity
- Survey findings from PNG show that whilst water access is predominantly unsafe in PNG, many people view it as safe. The need to raise awareness of water safety becomes essential given that it has become normal for people to drink from unsafe water.
- Water disruptions cause people to access water from various secondary sources, protected and unprotected.
- The presence of E. coli contamination in water sources despite using improved water sources.
- Water security affects quality of life.
- The importance of working in meaningful partnership with CSOs such as PIANGO using the Facility for Aiding Locally Led Engagement (FALE Pasifika) to localize partnerships in a unifying platform, bringing together changemakers across the Pacific to create a resilient region.
- FALE fosters solutions grounded in local knowledge, powered by a commitment to collaboration and inclusivity, complementing the work of government and development partners. FALE prioritizes local involvement and promoting innovative, people-centered approaches, ensuring transformative change that empowers communities to lead with confidence and efficiency.
- Health Care facilities are vulnerable to water insecurity due to climate change impacts
- 1 in 4 health care facilities globally lack basic water services, impacting 2 billion people. 1 in 5 Health Care facilities lack basic sanitation services, affecting 1.5 billion people.
- Climate change is increasing waterborne disease transmission
- Water Security is critical in health care facilities for infection prevention and control
- Collaboration between health and other sectors is crucial for protecting public

health

Call to Action

1. Water Security must be a priority issue for discussion in forum leaders' dialogues
2. Scale up financing for water security investments
3. Strengthen multi-sectoral engagement in water security as a key determinant of resilience.
4. Localization of efforts to ensure sustainability and continuity of investments.