

WaterAid Australia

COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea

Handwashing and good hygiene still key in fighting the serious threat of a mass outbreak

Scott Morrison has this morning announced Australian Government support in response to the worsening COVID-19 situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG). WaterAid applauds the Australian Government's commitment and continued support to our close friend and neighbour.

Given PNG's fragile health systems and with large-scale distribution of vaccines some time away, safe and reliable water supply and handwashing with soap is still the first line of defence against the spread of COVID-19.

With support from the Australian Government, WaterAid scaled up our water, sanitation and hygiene work in PNG, focusing on COVID-19 preventative measures, provision of water supply in communities and schools and national hygiene promotion, including handwashing with soap.

WaterAid Papua New Guinea's Director of Programs Navara Kiene said:

"The Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak here in Papua New Guinea is a welcome one, however the situation continues to be very real and very serious, with a large-scale outbreak looming. Our team and partners are continuing our work in a COVID safe way to ensure we can reach people with hygiene and handwashing education and facilities, as they are the first line of defence against the spread of infectious disease and will remain so before, during and after the COVID-19 vaccination rollout."

Rosie Wheen, Chief Executive, WaterAid Australia, said:

“The worsening COVID-19 outbreak in Papua New Guinea is extremely worrying. This year we have seen handwashing thrown into the spotlight as one of the key ways to help slow the spread of COVID-19. However, billions of people worldwide can’t do this, as they simply do not have access to soap or water. That’s why we will continue our vital work in Papua New Guinea and globally in scaling up our handwashing and hygiene projects to help slow the spread and protect people from COVID-19.”

- ENDS-

Contact

For more information please contact WaterAid Australia Communications Manager Tegan Dunne **E:** tegan.dunne@wateraid.org.au **Ph:** 0415 714 589

More information on WaterAid PNG’s COVID-19 support measures can be seen [here](#)

Notes to Editors

Fast facts on handwashing

- In PNG, only 43% of the population have access to safe drinking water less than a 30 minute return trip from the household
- Only 28% of households in rural PNG have a handwashing facility with soap and water within their households.
- Only 19% of households in rural PNG have a safe and hygienic toilet.
- 1 in 3 primary schools worldwide do not have handwashing facilities.
- Globally, around 310,000 children die each year from diarrheal diseases caused by dirty water and poor sanitation. That’s over 800 children each day, or one child every two minutes.

- 443 million school days are lost every year because of water-related illnesses.
- Handwashing with soap reduces the risk of diarrheal diseases by up to 47%.
- Lack of access to sanitation and poor hygiene contribute to approximately 88% of childhood deaths caused by diarrheal diseases

WaterAid

WaterAid is working to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. The international not-for-profit organisation works in 28 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 27 million people with clean water and 27 million people with decent toilets. For more information, visit www.wateraid.org.au follow @wateraidaustralia on Instagram, @WaterAidAus on Twitter, or find WaterAid Australia on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wateraidaustralia

- 785 million people in the world – one in ten – do not have clean water close to home.^[1]
- Two billion people in the world – almost one in four – do not have a decent toilet of their own.^[2]
- Around 310,000 children under five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases caused by poor water and sanitation. That's around 800 children a day, or one child every two minutes.
- Every \$2 invested in water and toilets returns an average of \$8 in increased productivity.^[3]
- \$50 can help run a handwashing campaign to reduce the spread of COVID-19.