

Water and sanitation for all

and the need for strengthened resilience across the Pacific



Access to safe and resilient water and sanitation is a critical development issue for the Pacific, with profound implications for livelihoods, economic growth, public health, the environment and human rights



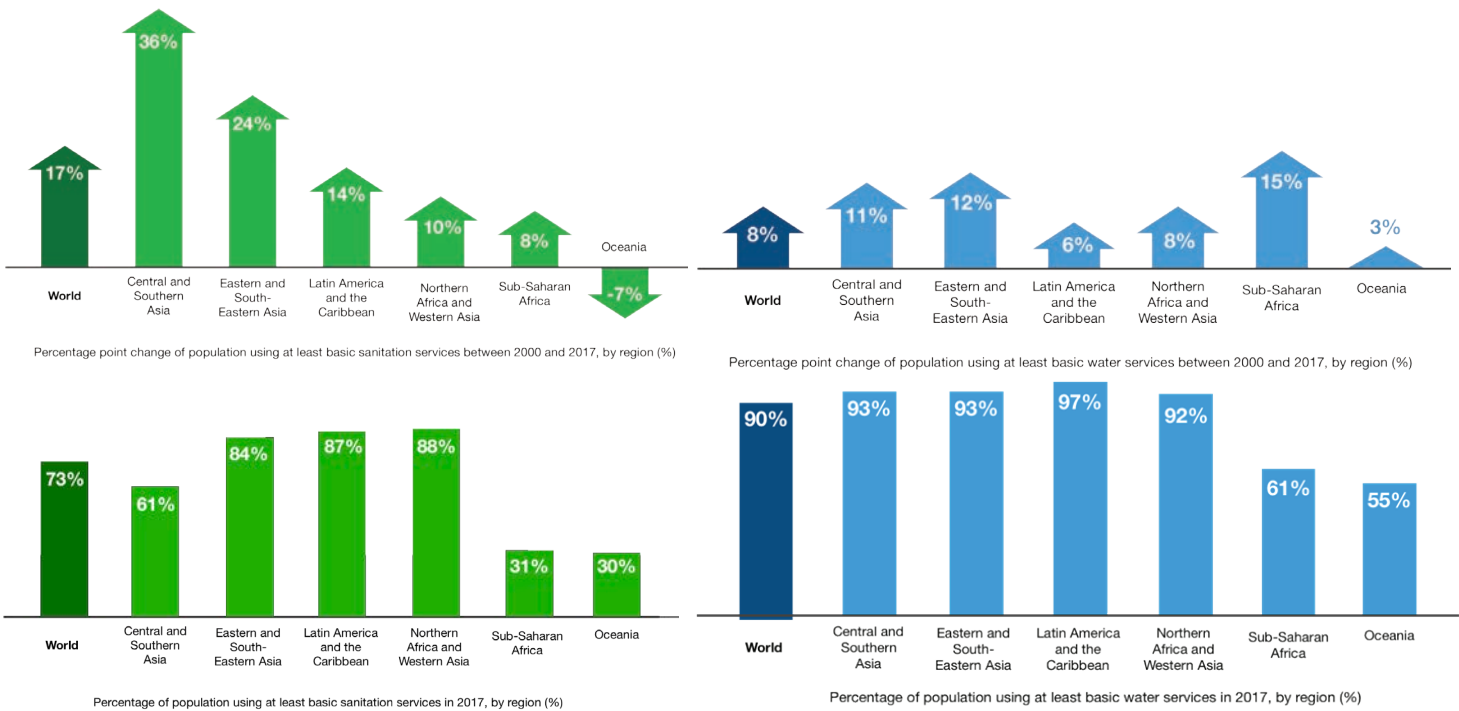
Figure 1: As an enabling goal, SDG6 is critical to the achievement of many other SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes targets for universal access to safe and affordable drinking-water, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and ending open defecation. The Sustainable Development Goal for water and sanitation (SDG6) is widely recognized as an enabling goal, critical to the achievement of many other SDGs.

While all Pacific Island Countries are making progress in increasing access to water and sanitation services, as a region these efforts are not keeping pace with population growth and the emerging impacts of climate change.

Latest country data collected through the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) shows that the region as a whole is lagging behind the rest of the world in achieving progress towards universal access to basic water and sanitation services. This varies from country to country and access also varies from urban to rural areas throughout the region.

As a whole, the Pacific has the lowest levels of access to at least basic sanitation services in the world, and is the only region where the proportion of people with access has reduced since 2000



The Pacific is home to significant rural, disbursed and isolated populations that face serious water and sanitation challenges compared to their urban counterparts

The Pacific is, by some margin, the least urbanised region of the world, and our people experience the world’s highest disparity in access to basic water between urban and rural areas. Our rural and outer island populations have relatively limited access to Government and private-sector services, and for these communities drinking water, sanitation and hygiene are primarily managed at the household, village or settlement level. In rural areas and informal settlements, the quality of drinking-water can have an important impact on health, adding to everyday disease levels and outbreaks, and contributing to high rates of child morbidity and mortality.

Strengthened partnerships are required to better equip our region’s small communities and households to establish, safely manage and maintain appropriate water and sanitation facilities throughout all conditions, while also maintaining safe drinking water and hygiene practices in homes and schools.

In the Pacific’s urban areas, 9 out of every 10 have access to at least basic drinking water supplies, however in rural communities less than half have such access

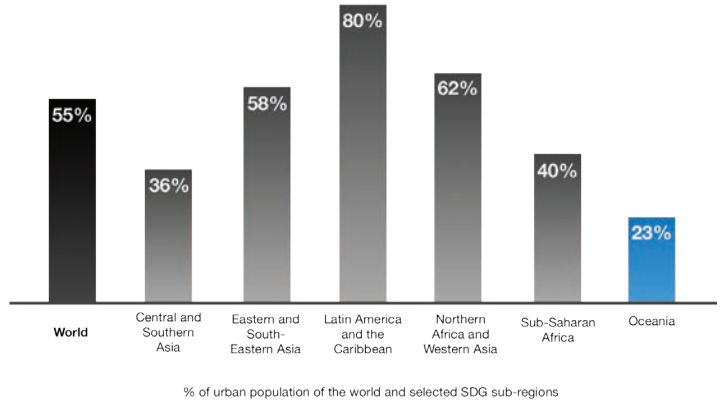


Figure 3: The Pacific is the world’s least urbanised SDG subregion

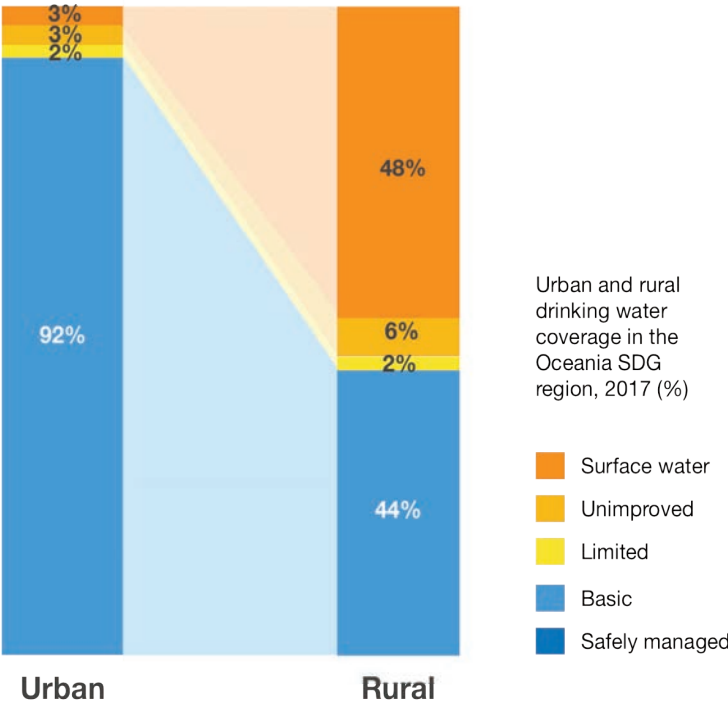


Figure 4: The Pacific experiences the world’s greatest disparity in access to basic drinking water between urban and rural areas.

Much of our region relies on limited and fragile water resources that require careful management and protection from human impacts

For many Pacific communities, the availability of freshwater resources is confined to small and fragile groundwater lenses, streams and/or rainwater collected from roofs. These scarce resources are vulnerable to overexploitation and contamination, particularly in atoll environments, where limited potable groundwater sources can be threatened by over-pumping, land use activities, and inappropriate sanitation facilities.

This is why efforts to achieve our region's water and sanitation targets must consider the water cycle as a whole, and use Integrated Water Resource Management approaches from "ridge to reef" to protect the sustainability of fresh water resources wherever possible. Across the Pacific, it is critical that water and sanitation solutions are sustainable, safe and do not adversely impact vulnerable water resources, noting that in some cases this will add to the cost of these solutions.

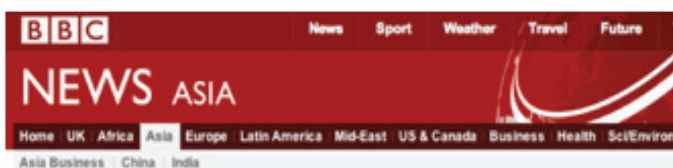


South Pacific islands running out of water

By Hilary Whiteman, CNN
October 4, 2011 – Updated 0936 GMT (1736 HKT)



Drought hits South Pacific islands



Fiji floods: State of emergency declared as rains continue



Pacific communities are disproportionately vulnerable to the water-related impacts of climate change and natural hazards, and capacity to anticipate, respond to and minimise these impacts is key to community resilience

In 2017, the Pacific was identified by the World Risk Report as the region with the highest disaster risk from a five year perspective, and the only region in which the population's vulnerability to extreme natural events had risen according to the World Risk Index (Vanuatu and Tonga were assessed to be the most vulnerable, with a further four Pacific island countries identified amongst the fifteen most vulnerable countries on earth).

Pacific Island Countries are highly exposed to a range of natural hazards that very often lead to disasters that affect the water security of thousands of people and exacerbate existing development challenges. The serious and emerging impacts of climate change add a further security dimension to the problem: threatening resources; increasing uncertainties; and intensifying the extremes of climate variability.

Climate change is increasing the risk of weather-related disasters in the Pacific, especially in combination with sea-level rise and associated flood, wave, tide, storm surge, wind intensity, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers and the potential of worsening water scarcity and drought.

Overall, projected changes to the region's climate over the course of this century are expected to increase the likelihood of hydro-meteorological disasters, which already account for over 75% of all reported natural disaster events in the Pacific.¹

Across the region, more is required to build community resilience to extreme events, including the strengthening of local capacities to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and mitigate the impacts of floods and droughts, and capacities to build and maintain resilient water and sanitation systems and hygiene practices.

¹ From the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific

2017 JMP data on Pacific Island Country and Territory progress towards SDG6 targets

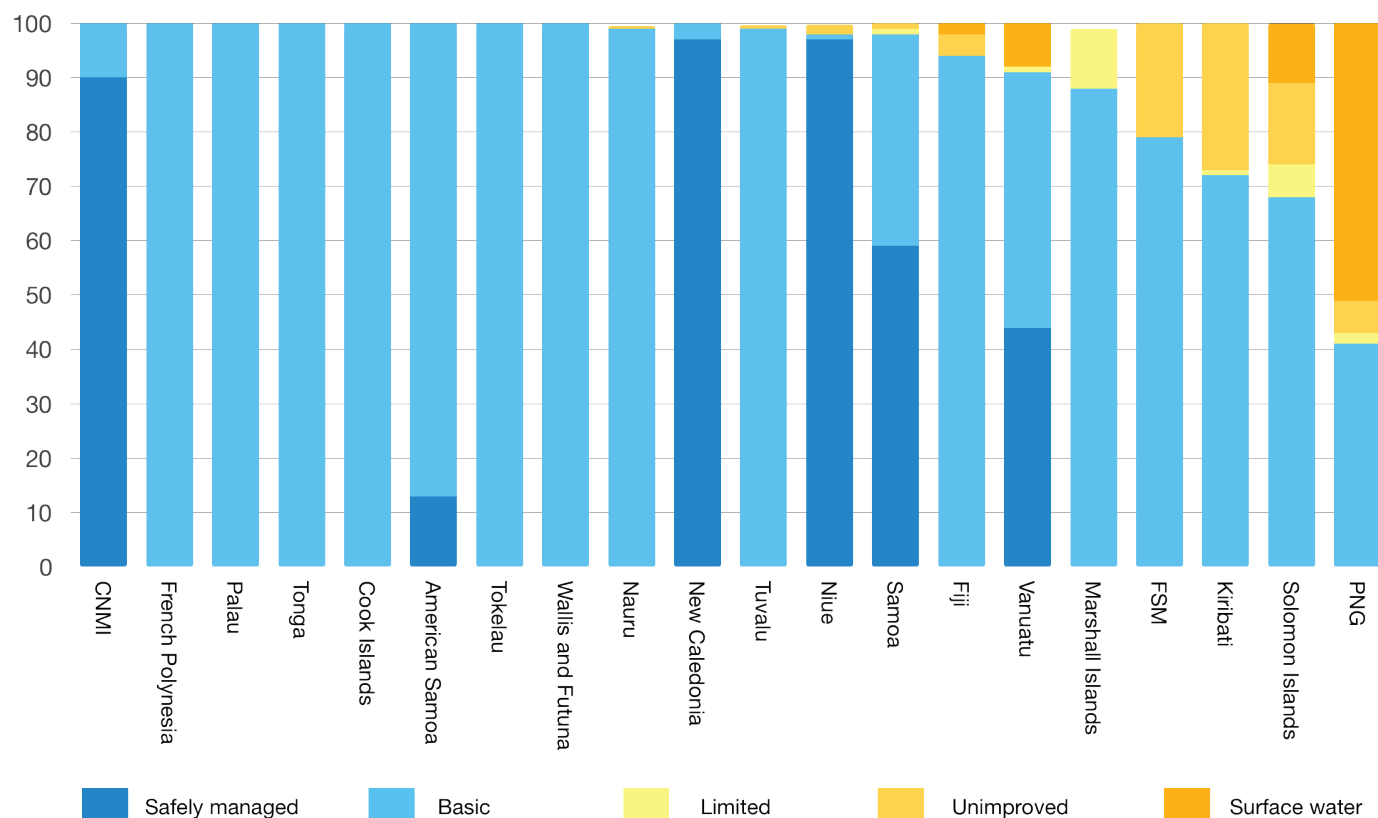


Figure 5: 2017 SDG6 reporting on access to drinking water services

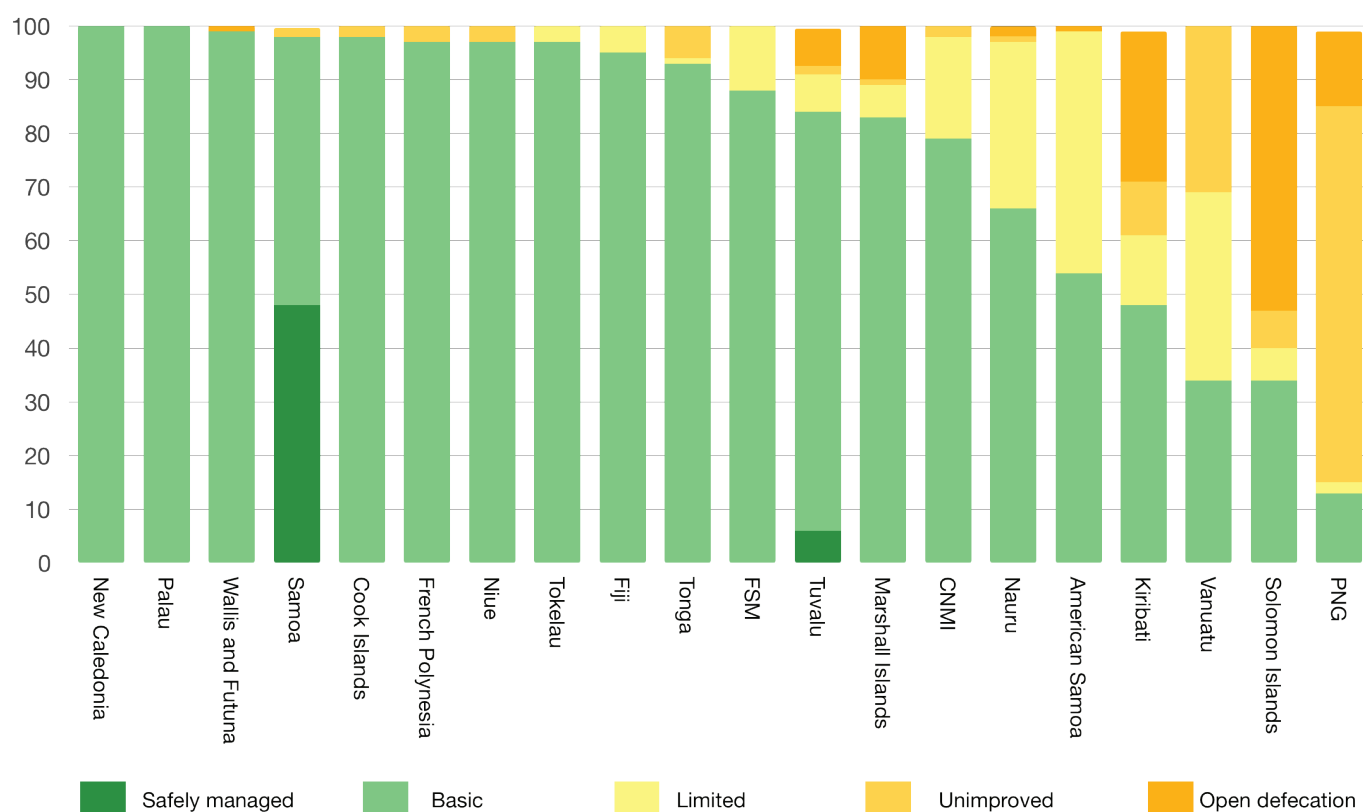


Figure 6: 2017 SDG6 reporting on access to sanitation services

All data contained in this fact sheet are drawn from the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) report, *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities*: UNICEF and WHO, 2019. Further JMP data is available in this report and through the website washdata.org.



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