**COVID-19 AND WATER**

The Covid-19 health crisis amplifies inequalities within the Mediterranean region. With regard to the water issue, research and scientific reports have been published highlighting the possible risks to water access and quality, from which political and sanitary measures have been taken to limit the negative effects on the most precarious communities facing the water supply system.

According to a number of researchers, the impact of human activity on the environment is disrupting biodiversity and creating conditions conducive to the emergence and spread of diseases such as the current pandemic of Covid-19. Indeed, as the article from The Guardian points out: “As habitat and biodiversity loss increase globally, the coronavirus outbreak may be just the beginning of mass pandemics.”: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe>

1. **Research on water issues**

Safe water supply, sanitation and hygiene conditions are essential to protect human health. This affirmation is even more true during a global pandemic as the Covid-19. Therefore, based on the WHO guidance report on water, sanitation and health care waste and the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) document, WHO has published a technical note for practitioners and water service providers with information and guidance on Coronavirus: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>

Moreover, “[The Water Research Foundation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/waterresearch/) is hosting a virtual international water research summit on environmental surveillance of Covid-19 indicators in sewersheds. By the end of April, a select group of world-renowned researchers and water leaders will come together to address challenges with environmental surveillance of COVID-19 to accelerate progress towards informing community health decision-making.”: <https://www.waterrf.org/event/latest-coronavirus-research-update>

Finally, microbiologists at the KWR research institute in the Netherlands found traces of the virus in municipal wastewater. They explain that screening for the virus at sewage treatment plants could be relevant to predict the spread of cases in advance and thus monitor the evolution of the pandemic: <https://www.dutchwatersector.com/news/sewage-water-as-indicator-for-spreading-of-covid-19>

With regard to the efficiency of the wastewater treatment process and the potential risks of contamination, industry groups have started to publish information and advice for water and wastewater professionals. "Current disinfection conditions in wastewater treatment facilities should be sufficient," OSHA said in a statement. This article provides more details: <https://www.tpomag.com/online_exclusives/2020/03/covid-19-guidance-for-wastewater-workers>

Indeed, according to the EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency) the COVID-19 has not been detected in drinking water supplies in the United States either. Based on current data, the risk to water supplies is low. Many drinking water systems are discontinuing service interruptions, restoring service to customers whose service was previously cut off, and refraining from imposing penalties for non-payment. The EPA provides more detailed information in this article: <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>

However, while tap water remains safe in some countries, others face two types of problems: on the one hand a poor water sanitation and on the other hand an increase in the need for water leading to over-consumption at the domestic level.

1. **Sanitation issues**

Human Rights Watch has redacted a document provides an overview of human

rights concerns posed by the coronavirus outbreak and grants a paragraph to promote the rights to water and sanitation: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/19/human-rights-dimensions-covid-19-response>

“Oxfam estimates that nearly three billion people across the developing world do not have access to clean water, and millions more do not have adequate healthcare and live in crowded slums or refugee camps where social isolation is impossible. Without a significant investment in public health in the poorest countries, the pandemic could lead to 40 million deaths, according to an analysis by the [Imperial College of London](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/196496/coronavirus-pandemic-could-have-caused-40/).” More about Oxfam's immediate action during the current pandemic on clean water, hygiene in this article: <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/oxfams-covid-19-pandemic-response-leans-on-water-and-hygiene-work/>

While handwashing seems to be a common reflex in the fight against Covid-19, in some countries where water is scarce, this simple life-saving gesture is difficult to do and remind how vulnerable they are to Covid-19 and other illnesses. “We don’t have enough water to drink and cook our food, so where will we get water to wash our hands frequently?”, explain a resident of Nairobi. What will happen in such places if and when the pandemic escalates and the need for proper sanitation grows ever more urgent? UN, aid groups and public health officials are taking steps to ensure people living in informal settlements have access to running water at this critical time:

* <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060042> ;
* <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/30/819151076/how-do-you-wash-your-hands-to-fend-off-coronavirus-if-water-is-scarce?t=1585833298634&t=1585921521380> ;
* <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-what-might-more-hand-washing-mean-in-countries-with-water-shortages-134625> ;
* <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/22/access-water-vital-covid-19-response-0>

In some regions of Central and Southeast Europe, government are also facing fragile healthcare systems and people live without access to running water: <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/16/polands-coronavirus-fight-exposes-healthcare-weaknesses/>

“Without urgent action, this health crisis risks becoming a child-rights crisis.” – UNICEF. Some children are cut off from safe water because they live in remote areas, or in places where water is untreated or polluted. They are therefore among the populations most vulnerable to Covid-19: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/agenda-for-action>

Refugees and internally displaced are also among the most vulnerable populations. [Refugees and internally displaced populations](https://africacenter.org/publication/shifting-borders-africas-displacement-crisis-and-its-security-implications/) are congregated in camps with inadequate access to water, soap, or sanitation, raising the risk of water-borne diseases. Health services are often overstretched and inaccessible:

* <https://www.msf.org/msf-provides-relief-items-and-adapts-response-covid-19-idlib>
* <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/27/bosnia-crams-thousands-of-migrants-into-tent-camp-to-halt-covid-19-spread>

1. **Domestic water issues**

Mediterranean region faces a huge water stress on the water supply systems on domestic levels.

Istanbul water levels running low as residents wash hands.Water levels in Istanbul have dropped to their second lowest point in the past 10 years as people use more water to wash their hands due to the coronavirus, the news site Diken [said](https://ahvalnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/ahvalnews.com/turkey-coronavirus/istanbul-water-levels-running-low-residents-wash-hands-expert?amp) on Wednesday: <https://ahvalnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/ahvalnews.com/turkey-coronavirus/istanbul-water-levels-running-low-residents-wash-hands-expert?amp>

Jordan announced 40% more water supply : <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/water-resources-operating-highest-capacity-demand-surges-40-cent>

Water consumption increased in the metropolitan areas of Tehran by 26 percent. Explaining that nearly all of the provinces face serious water shortages: <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/446498/COVID-19-crisis-washing-hands-for-20-seconds-not-wasting-water>