



How can improving inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene enhance Labuan Bajo as a tourism destination?

Practice Note – July 2021

Tourism is a key and growing industry in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, Indonesia, as a destination attractive to both national and international tourists. Labuan Bajo has been designated by President Joko Widodo as a super-premium tourism development destination in Indonesia. Annual international tourist visits to Flores were growing rapidly before the global COVID-19 pandemic, and visitors increased 40% per year between 2010 (41,100) and 2019 (187,100). However, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions have had immediate, deep negative effects on tourism. This Practice Note considers the importance and challenges of ensuring socially-inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are in place to support the tourism sector through difficult times and for future growth from the perspective of government, tourism operators and the community.

Findings presented here were gathered as part of research undertaken with stakeholders in Labuan Bajo between July and November 2020.

Water security and supply issues

Labuan Bajo is water scarce with clear wet and dry seasons and an average rainfall of 1500 mm/year.

Local communities in Labuan Bajo differentiate water sources for drinking and for hygiene, sanitation and other purposes. The majority of residents primarily buy bottled water for drinking, usually purchasing 20L refillable bottles from local water vendors or larger suppliers. Other residents boil their water before drinking it. Sources of water for purposes other than drinking include piped water from the Municipal Water Supply Company (PDAM), shallow wells and boreholes, and tank water from the PDAM and other

individual businesses. The piped supply from the PDAM is not reliable, and only flows twice a week in communities. For hotels, similar water sources are used. Hotels can withstand the irregular PDAM water supply as they have large onsite water storage tanks, whereas community households rarely have sufficient storage capacity to last through water shortages. Seasonal water scarcity is a major concern, especially for the community who purchase water from retailers at high prices during times of drought. Moreover, communities in small islands experience water challenges since the only water supply is from the main island, transported in tanks by boat.

The stakeholders in Labuan Bajo are concerned primarily about the current disparities in water distribution, rather than issues about water quality. The inequality in current water provision arrangements between hotels and communities is a key concern.

Sanitation

The formative research noted that whilst there is good sanitation access for guests and staff of hotels, this is not the case in surrounding communities. There is higher sanitation access in the more populated Labuan Bajo Village (85%), while some villages have sanitation access as low as 38%. The situation in Labuan Bajo village has improved significantly since implementation of the national Community Based Total Sanitation (STBM) program in 2012. However, communities living on the smaller islands have poor access due to a lack of water resources (for flushing) and suitable locations for toilets. In small cruise ships (with capacity of 10-15 passengers), the toilet facilities are very simple and discharge directly to the sea without treatment.

Many community members who do have household latrines noted the difference in accessibility, type, comfort, safety and quality of toilets compared to those available to tourists in hotels, which are good quality, comfortable, safe and private toilets complete with handwashing facilities and soap. Currently the sanitation facilities for different genders and people with disabilities is limited in public places and some hotels. Government officials are aware of the need for improvement.

Wastewater, faecal sludge and solid waste management in hotels and the broader community are a concern for all respondents.

Hand hygiene

Good hand hygiene practices have gained importance as an infection prevention and control measure for COVID-19 disease. Good hand hygiene by hotel staff is also viewed as critical to guest satisfaction and handwashing with soap at critical times is reported as standard operating procedure in hotels for staff, with sufficient facilities provided to do so. However, it was reported that good hand hygiene may not always be practised because of “individual habits”. Whilst there was a strong focus on protecting tourists’ enjoyment and health (e.g. with good food hygiene) there was little mention of protecting staff health through good hygiene.

Some hotels reported regularly training staff in hygiene, especially food hygiene. In addition, hygiene practices in the small cruise ships require attention. This type of tour service is one of the main attractions to tourists in Labuan Bajo, who spend at least 2-3 days and nights on the cruise. These small cruise services are usually provided by local people who lack proper training in hygiene, sanitation, safe water treatment and storage, and waste management.

Communities are aware of the good conditions provided for handwashing and hygiene in hotels, and of their comparative lack of water and handwashing facility access. Hotel staff report that they practice workplace personal hygiene at home, “but such practices have not yet had a significant impact on other family members, particularly children”.

COVID-19 pandemic impacts

Stakeholders recognise positive and negative implications of COVID-19 and associated travel restrictions, hygiene requirements and economic consequences. Positive impacts include:

- Increased use of good hygiene practices in the community, especially hand washing with soap;
- Increased awareness by residents that personal hygiene stops transmission and keeps their family safe has increased.

Negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Significant reduction of hotel occupancy;

- Closure or sale of some hotels;
 - Response by business to multiple disasters.
- The flow-on loss or reduced work for employees is leading to financial difficulties with further impacts on the families of employees and the wider community.

Concerns for socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial water management

The data suggested that, to date, there has been limited conflict in the community due to lack of water. However, the disparity between community and hotel access to water is recognised. Concerns about how the PDAM manage water, particularly given frequently interrupted water flow, were raised, with recommendations to improve the governance and management of clean water. Many community members were supportive of the idea that hotels should contribute to water stewardship and broader society by providing WASH services and supporting STBM through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Unsafe wastewater management and sanitation practices have the potential to contaminate the environment and reduce the attractiveness of Labuan Bajo as a tourism destination. Moreover, national documents highlight the threat of climate change to tourism industries, but awareness of the impacts are not effectively linked to potential water issues and increased risk of infectious diseases spreading due to climate warming.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) need increased recognition and consideration

Many GEDSI issues were identified as key influences on hotel operations in Labuan Bajo’s tourism sector. GEDSI is integral to the complex network of social, environmental, political and economic issues that shape tourism. When focusing on disability, the aged and children there is little recognition by government agencies and hotel management of the different needs of tourists and the community. There is also minimal recognition of the need for women’s and members of socially vulnerable groups’ voices to be heard in water planning and management. It was also noted:

- Government policies and their requirements for public/community and hotel WASH facilities were perceived not to be fulfilled, particularly sanitation/

toilet facilities for people with a disability, the aged, and children;

- There is no training in menstrual hygiene management (MHM) or broader social inclusion in the workplace;
- Collaboration and cooperation are key to socially inclusive engagement with female and male staff, with women in communities, and with the GEDSI needs of the community;
- The likely GEDSI factors related to COVID-19 observed elsewhere, such as an increase in domestic violence on women and children, have not been recognised.

A lack of cooperation and collaboration creates barriers to tourism development

A lack of collaborative platforms between communities, government and tourism operators creates barriers to addressing socially-inclusive WASH issues, ultimately impacting tourism development. More effective cooperation between groups to address socially-inclusive WASH issues in Labuan Bajo could address priority issues including:

- Increasing basic sanitation coverage in communities, including on small islands;
- Improving inclusive WASH practices in the community;
- Increasing the supply of clean water in the community;
- Improving access to water during the dry season;
- Offering training to increase awareness and create behaviour change;
- Improving GEDSI awareness, access and outcomes.

Improved collaboration and planning processes are required to engage with the community and gather their inputs into policy making, and for the community to be involved in destination planning.

Implications

Socially inclusive access to WASH is important for the tourism sector to maintain a strong reputation with tourists and to build a social licence to operate from local communities. Whilst all stakeholders envision tourism success contributing to an improved economy, enhancing community welfare, human resource development and improved public and environmental health, a number of changes are required to achieve this vision. The following recommendations are made

as steps towards achieving the vision of Labuan Bajo as a tourism destination benefitting all stakeholders.

Recommendations

1. Government

- 1.1. Improve water security in Labuan Bajo for all stakeholders by building more effective collaboration in water supply planning to ensure equal distribution of water supply for communities in the main island, small islands and for tourism services.
- 1.2. Address and ensure compliance to policies supporting the needs of different genders, the elderly, youth, children and people with a disability, and their differing WASH access needs in community, hotels and public places;
- 1.3. Integrate socially-inclusive WASH and water stewardship into tourism policy and plans. Communicate and enforce policy.
- 1.4. Enforce regulations for wastewater management, drainage and solid waste and encourage community behaviours to achieve the vision of Labuan Bajo as a clean, safe and attractive destination.

2. Community/Civil Society Organisations

- 2.1. Develop and deliver targeted handwashing hygiene promotion activities for specific groups (e.g. men and children) in the community to increase and sustain handwashing behaviours beyond COVID-19 and ensure access to handwashing facilities and soap supplies.
- 2.2. Ensure equitable access to water for communities as well as tourism development projects.
- 2.3. Promote and collaborate with communities to implement STBM and safe faecal sludge management.
- 2.4. Encourage civil society organisations to support households in building accessible inclusive WASH facilities.

3. Hotels

- 3.1. Develop an Inclusive-WASH-at-Work program to support hygiene behaviour change in hotels and at home for staff (hand and food hygiene, and MHM). Encourage private sector (through Tourism Board) and tourists to contribute to STBM program to achieve open defecation free status in all surrounding areas.

- 3.2 Maintain high quality service for tourists whilst improving water efficiency and reducing consumption of a shared resource.
- 3.3 Increase CSR activities and contribute to the community and clean environment.
- 3.4 Adopt a water stewardship strategy that considers factors beyond the hotel premises (e.g. environmental and social dimensions of water); and uses CSR programs to support collaboration and cooperation with communities via community capacity building programs, and Inclusive WASH-at-Work training.
- 3.5 Implement Inclusive WASH-at-Work guidelines to ensure barriers to faecal-oral transmission pathways are disrupted to protect health of tourists, staff and communities (e.g. good food hygiene as barrier to contamination of fresh produce).

4. All Stakeholders

- 4.1 Recognise that women's water needs and social roles using water in the household are greater than those of men and that water scarcity has greater negative impacts on women and girls.
- 4.2 Involve more women and disabled groups in socially-inclusive WASH decision-making processes to improve stakeholder awareness about the importance of inclusive WASH and create more effective gender-sensitive and inclusive WASH services.
- 4.3 Expand existing multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. POKJA AMPL, Tourism Board, Tourism Association etc) including Government, tourism sector, communities, civil society organisations and academia to discuss, prioritise and manage:
 - Inclusive WASH risks and needs of all stakeholders;
 - Water quality and quantity and water stewardship;
 - Commercial challenges and health risk assessments;
 - Future challenges including climate change impacts;
 - Actions required to maintain Labuan Bajo as a desirable tourist destination.
- 4.4 Government and hotels to provide measures to support the poor and vulnerable in the community to improve water access through economic hardship. Water access is critical for

hygiene practices for infection prevention and control (such as COVID-19) so benefits all stakeholders.

- 4.5 PDAM, communities and small hotels to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to identify, prioritise and manage risks (e.g. overextraction, saline intrusion) to their water supply systems, with technical support from Government, taking local cultural norms for water management into account;
- 4.6 Develop Inclusive WASH-at-Work guidelines, procedures and certification system and integrate into approaches to re-open tourism by addressing COVID-19 risks. This has potential for broader scale-up across Indonesian tourist destinations.
- 4.7 Government and tourism association to target training of Inclusive WASH-at-Work for small hotels and small cruise ships travelling to smaller islands in order to improve the quality and inclusion of WASH services and more effective waste management.
- 4.8 Provide contextualised and culturally appropriate hand hygiene campaigns to increase hand washing with soap as a social norm in communities.

Acknowledgements: The research project, *Engaging corporate actors for inclusive WASH-at-Work*, is supported by the Australian Government's Water for Women Fund and implemented by Griffith University's International WaterCentre (IWC). IWC works in partnership with Udayana University and Institute of Technology Bandung and the East Nusa Tenggara Province Government, Labuan Bajo Government, Nusa Cendana University, in Labuan Bajo West Manggarai,.

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