

Making Future PWA's Involvement in ISO Standards aim to improve Water Services

A new series of ISO standards has been developed to offer the international community practical tools to address the challenge of effectively managing limited water resources in Thailand.

"Aiming to provide the population in Thailand with access to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as meet the principles of sustainable development," said Mr.Somboon Sunanthapongsak, the PWA Governor.

"Their publication is a first step towards responding to the United Nations' concern in recognizing that access to water is an essential human right. The UN has set ambitious goals to increase access to drinking water and wastewater services, particularly in developing countries. These ISO standards will play a primary role in promoting access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation through improved governance at all levels, that is why PWA adopt these ISO series of standards so as to improve the service to users and the relevant stakeholders"

The guidelines include service-oriented standard ISO 24510 for the assessment and improvement of services to users; management-oriented ISO 24511 for wastewater utilities and assessment of wastewater services; ISO 24512 for drinking water utilities and assessment of drinking water services.

"The main objective of the international standards is to provide the relevant stakeholders with guidelines for assessing and improving services to users, and managing water utilities in line with goals set by the relevant authorities. Intended to facilitate dialogue between the stakeholders, the guidance will enable them to develop a mutual understanding of the functions and tasks that fall within the scope of water utilities. Their implementation will be monitored to provide feedback for further improvement," The governor explained.

To address this need, ISO developed three separate but linked standards:

- ISO 24510: Activities relating to drinking water and wastewater services — guidelines for assessing services and improving them for users
- ISO 24511: Activities relating to drinking water and wastewater services — guidelines for managing wastewater utilities and assessing wastewater services
- ISO 24512: Activities relating to drinking water and wastewater services — guidelines for managing drinking water utilities and assessing drinking water services

These standards set out in sequence a description of water services and briefly describe the physical (infrastructural) and managerial (institutional) components of utilities. Core objectives for water services considered to be globally relevant at the broadest level (e.g., protection of public health, provision of services, sustainability of water utilities, environmental protection) are set out, followed by guidelines for managing utilities. These objectives are then related to examples of possible actions that may be taken to achieve them. Each objective can also be characterized by related service assessment criteria.

This International Standard, ISO 24510, ISO 24511 and ISO 24512 are consistent with the principle of the "plan-do-check-act" (PDCA) approach: they propose a step-by-step process, from identifying the components and defining the objectives of the utility to establishing performance indicators, with a loop back to the objectives and to the management, after having assessed the performances.

“Because the organization of water utilities falls within a legal and institutional framework specific to each country, this International Standard does not prescribe the respective roles of various stakeholders, nor does it define required internal organizations for local, regional or national bodies that can be involved in the provision of water services. In particular, this International Standard does not interfere with the free choice of the responsible bodies regarding the general organization and the management of their utilities. This International Standard is applicable to publicly and privately owned and operated utilities alike, and does not favor any particular ownership or operational model.” Mr. Somboon revealed.

“Yes, this is the big step of PWA to moving FORWARD, it not only benefits us but also our shared water resources equitably and durably – which are not only crucial for our quality of life, but vital for our very survival”