



Civil Society
WASH
Learning Fund

WASH
In Pacific Island Communities



Australian Government
AusAID

These documents were compiled by Naomi Carrard of the Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS with the assistance of Kajute O'Riordan from WaterAid in Australia. The three learning workshops were an Australian Government AusAID initiative, managed by WaterAid in Australia.



WASH In Pacific Island Communities

Nine of the 44 activities supported by the AusAID CSO WASH Fund are promoting access to water, sanitation and hygiene in Pacific Island communities. During the Brisbane learning event, participants from Live & Learn Environmental Education, Oxfam, World Vision, Australian Red Cross (ARC) and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) shared their experiences and lessons learnt from their work in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

Highlights

Organisations working with Pacific island communities face particular challenges in promoting sustainable WASH, due to remoteness and inaccessibility, the difficulty of finding affordable and reliable sources of spare parts, and availability of skilled labour. Pacific participants benefited from meeting and exchanging ideas and approaches. Discussions focused on

appropriate technologies for challenging environments, with remoteness, water scarcity, salinity, high groundwater tables and unpredictable weather patterns emerging as key issues. Participants also spoke about their different approaches to building demand for sanitation and hygiene and their efforts to support and strengthen community governance structures.

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Participant Stories

Piloting Sanitation Marketing In The Pacific – Live & Learn Environmental Education

Live & Learn Environmental Education (Live & Learn) are modelling and testing the use of sanitation marketing approaches as part of their sanitation and hygiene behaviour change programs in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. At the Brisbane learning event, Ben Kami and Paul Lewthwaite from Live & Learn Vanuatu shared their story as a television interview.



Ben Kami
WASH Project Officer, Live & Learn Vanuatu.

“One lesson we have learned is that a key issue limiting sustainable improved sanitation infrastructure is lack of local ownership and personal desire to maintain infrastructure. This stems from a long history in the Pacific of hand outs, the so called ‘cargo culture’. We have tried to improve ownership by requiring a minimum cash and in-kind contribution from the communities that we work with and have focused on training people to build their own infrastructure rather than just build and supply new toilets. Sanitation Marketing is a general term used to describe a process that follows commercial principals used by companies that sell stuff like cell phones and soft drinks. If it works to encourage people to save money and purchase

things that they don’t need then we decided it was worth trying to help encourage the construction and sale of basic affordable sanitation products like Ventilated Improved Pit toilets that people do need.

‘We train these small enterprise groups in construction of various demonstration sanitation options with a focus on local design development to meet local wants, needs and materials.’

Improved sanitation is not a natural part of what people want. So first we identify and select communities motivated to stop open defecation by using tools like Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). We run health awareness education using Participatory Health Awareness and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) to facilitate combined community awareness around transmission of diseases, list community priorities for change both women and men then support the establishment of women based small enterprise group to advance these changes.

We train these small enterprise groups in construction of various demonstration sanitation options with a focus on local design development to meet local wants, needs and materials. We also organize small business training matched to local needs provided by local training organisations to help build support networks. Assistance is provided to the new small enterprises to establish supply lines, government linkages and micro finance options and we provide ongoing small enterprise support and mentoring to help encourage and grow the new

small enterprise. In addition, we bring local government officials for example from the Ministry of Health to meet the new enterprise groups. This also builds local support linkages.

We run a school education program in surrounding schools including supply of work books for students, games, posters and hygiene teaching modules for teachers. We develop a supportive community advertising campaign, for example hygiene song or poster competitions.

We have found the sanitation marketing approach is a slow process in the Pacific where there is not a large base of small profit making community businesses, unlike Indonesia and Asia where business is part of their culture. When communities understand and try the small business approach self-esteem becomes a natural part of the process because communities are working for themselves, generating income, improving health and school attendance in their community by building and developing their own products to match their own needs. Ownership is part of the process because people decide for themselves that they want to improve their standard of living, status and general well being and are willing to pay for it. Improved sanitation becomes one of the high priority items on their ‘want list’.”





Introducing Composting Toilets In Fiji

As part of their program in Fiji, Live & Learn are introducing composting toilets to overcome sanitation challenges. Communities that have benefited from this initiative are those affected by poor accessibility and water quality, which compromises sanitation standards in their communities. Morena Rigamoto and Simone Koto from Live & Learn Fiji spoke about community responses to composting toilets and about their efforts mainstreaming gender equality into their WASH program, focusing on sanitation marketing and hygiene behaviour change.



Morena Rigamoto (Country Manager) and Simone Koto (Program Coordinator)
Live & Learn Environmental Education Fiji

“One of our target communities is in the western part of Fiji which has less rain than other parts and one of the main issues is lack of access to regular water supply. We conducted a Research of Aspirations and Perceptions (RAP) at the start of our project to understand community

‘In these communities, flush toilets had been installed whether there was a regular water supply or not. So the need for an alternative model of toilet is really high.’



wants and attitudes around sanitation and hygiene and issues around access to water. In these communities, flush toilets had been installed whether there was a regular water supply or not. So the need for an alternative model of toilet is really high. We’re working to provide an alternative like a composting toilet that doesn’t need water (this addresses issues surrounding limitations to water). It’s practical and it’s easy for them to use, it’s safe, it’s very hygienic and the system does not use water. That’s what we’re finding, people like it, they want it. It gives them an alternative way to deal with their waste and turn it into compost and hopefully as the project continues they will be able to use this as manure on gardens.

Our program is based on various past experiences that Live & Learn has had. For example, to take a gender sensitive approach, gender is incorporated into the whole initial planning of the project in communities. The Live & Learn team have gone through gender training to be able to recognise ways in which we can best mainstream gender into this program. Also the communities are encouraged to look at the designs of their toilets and see how best we can meet the needs of men, women, boys and girls and also the elderly and disabled. So that has been good.

We initially started with a compost toilet that was built but still detached from the house. The later designs had the compost toilets built right beside the house and another joined to the house by a ramp with railings to support those who have difficulty walking. We also find it very encouraging that the women and men are actively involved throughout this initiative.”





Working With Women And Finding Creative Ways To Promote Hygiene Behaviour Change – Oxfam In PNG

Oxfam is working with three communities in the East Sepik Region of PNG. Oxfam's Gender Program Officer Gellie Akui attended the Brisbane learning event with Xavier Jirawadra, from Oxfam's local partner the Sepik Community Development Alliance.



Gellie Akui and Xavier Jirawadra
Gellie Akui Gender Program Officer working with Oxfam in PNG and Xavier Jirawadra Community Development Officer with Sepik Community Development Alliance

“The PNG program is one of six country programs Oxfam is coordinating. We are working in the East Sepik Province of PNG. Our project includes sanitation, hygiene and water supply components and we put a lot of emphasis on education.

On hygiene, we conduct PHAST training with women in a Women's Water User and Leadership group. The group represents about 6-10 households, and after training the women go back and sit with each individual household, especially mothers, and talk to them about hygiene. We find this a very effective way of getting health messages back to households. It's also part of our work on gender equity, which we focus on a lot. Women leaders are elected for Water User Groups and they work with other community leaders.

The communities that we work with have very low literacy levels so in PHAST training we emphasise role plays and use other techniques including song. People begin to understand what we are trying to say regarding hand washing. We also demonstrate use of a tippy tap and the community starts to get

a clear picture of how they can apply these things in their own household. We've found this a great way to engage young people and children and motivate them to engage in project activities.

We've developed this approach over time. One thing that we have learned is that although these methods are time consuming, it's essential to put people first. If we just go in with techniques that do not really suit the context then people would not really understand and would not change to practice positive hygiene behaviour. So we look at ways to adapt to the local context and also how local materials can be used, then people are responsive.

Using locally available materials is essential so the community has an ongoing supply of equipment and they can easily maintain facilities. For example the community finds equipment such as poles and tank bases for construction of rainwater catchment systems.”

‘The group represents about 6-10 households, and after training the women go back and sit with each individual household, especially mothers, and talk to them about hygiene. We find this a very effective way of getting health messages back to households.’





WASH In Vanuatu – ADRA And Australian Red Cross

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Australian Red Cross (ARC) are both implementing Civil Society WASH Fund projects in Vanuatu.

Joseph Joel with ADRA in Vanuatu spoke about his work in Malekula and Santo Islands.



Joseph Joel
ADRA Vanuatu

“ADRA Vanuatu is currently working on five water projects, three already completed and we still have another two to go. We’re working in Malekula and Santo, the two biggest islands in the country. One thing I’m really happy about is the participation of the community, they really have ownership of the project. They contribute resources that they have, getting all the sand and the coral ready and also taking care of our staff when they’re in the project sites. They have been contributing a lot and I really enjoy seeing how much they participate in the process.

Our work requires careful planning and coordination with the community and we have to work around the challenges that come with working in an island country like Vanuatu. In the cyclone season, it’s hard to travel from island to island. In the dry season the ground is really hard and strong and it’s hard to find a digger so the local people have to dig trenches covering about three to four kilometres, this is very hard work.

One challenge we face is sourcing affordable equipment locally. In Vanuatu, we have only a few hardware options available and they’re so expensive. To make the best use of our project funds we’ve been sourcing some materials from Australia. We only choose equipment that is also available in Vanuatu, so that communities can find replacement parts in the future, but for now we are able to make savings and use this to support additional communities.

For sustainability, the community has been trained in maintenance and there are local village plumbers who know what type of fittings they need if there are any problems with the water supply systems. They can easily get the parts and the fittings in Vila. We work closely with the water management committee to make decisions about where to lay pipes and so on.”

Lisa Bong, WASH Sub-Branch Officer with the Red Cross Vanuatu and Kezia Brett, Program Manager for the Red Cross Civil Society WASH Fund

project attended the Brisbane learning event. They presented a poster about their work in Ambrym, where they are prioritising hygiene promotion during the first stage of their WASH program.

Lisa Bong
WASH Sub-Branch Officer Red Cross Vanuatu

“We are implementing a WASH project in Ambrym province. In Ambrym during the dry season there is very little rain and the rain supply can be contaminated by active volcanos. When the wells dry up, there are only coconuts to drink. So people drink coconut water and use sea water to wash clothes, bathe and cook food.

Our project is focused on hygiene promotion, latrine construction and water supply. So far we’ve been focusing on hygiene promotion. We started our project with PHAST training to build awareness of hygiene and health issues, in particular handwashing with soap. During the PHAST workshops lots of people in the community said that they know that they need to use soap to wash their hands but they don’t have the soap and they don’t have the basins. Then a few weeks later when we were visiting communities we found that people had actually come up with their own basins by cutting a flotation buoy in half and building a stand so it sits above the ground. So people are finding innovative solutions. We recently held a reflection workshop and community members said they had already seen health benefits in the community.”

Messages For WASH Sustainability

Efforts to support and strengthen community governance systems are critical for WASH sustainability in the Pacific, as remote communities are responsible for managing and maintaining their own water systems and sanitation facilities.

As well as supporting community governance systems, efforts to link community groups with government agencies will aid longer term sustainability.

CSOs in the Pacific can help forge these links and can play a role strengthening government policies and programs.

CSOs working in the Pacific are adapting a variety of WASH approaches to suit the local environmental and cultural contexts. Approaches that respond to local drivers at both the community and local government levels are likely to be more successful and sustainable.

WASH sustainability can be improved by selecting technologies and piloting approaches that make use of locally available materials, strengthen local supply chains and respond to the environmental limitations.