

Community Water and Sanitation in the Pacific: Fostering Sustainable WASH Marketplaces

Vanuatu update: July 2015

This research project works in partnership with impoverished informal communities and local enabling actors (from government, utilities and community service organisations (CSOs)) in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. We are using a process known as participatory action research, where the communities and enabling actors are co-researchers alongside our team, and we move towards actions based on the knowledge that we have co-generated in the early phases of the research. The research activities investigate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) exchanges, which are the processes by which people go about fulfilling their WASH needs by interacting with one another and the enabling actors. We investigate the access communities have to WASH products and services, how communities use these WASH products and services, and how such access and use can impact on individual and community well-being. We aim to understand and help to foster the conditions under which sustained, self-determined WASH exchange systems can operate among Pacific island communities.

Our role in this project is mainly to facilitate action planning and bring communities and enabling actors together, particularly where existing government and CSO programs may be of interest to participants. As well as empowering communities to improve their WASH situation, we will gain insight that can be applied to policy and practice in Melanesia more widely. In Vanuatu we are working with communities at Etas and Club Hippique. Residents of these communities have mixed informal leases, or are squatting on the land illegally. Residents at Etas do not have piped water supply, nor do those residing in the Paama community of Club Hippique.

Project phases

Phase 1 (September 2014 - complete): Investigate the community WASH and well-being situations and exchange systems; meet with enabling actors to understand the country context.

Phase 2 (February 2015 - complete): Investigate the WASH situation and exchange systems within individual households in target communities.

Phase 2.5 (June 2015 - complete): Investigate the impacts of Cyclone Pam on the WASH priorities of communities and enabling actors.

Phase 3 (September 2015 - scheduled): Work with communities towards identifying WASH aspirations and developing action plans; bring communities and enabling actors together to share the knowledge they have generated thus far in the project, including community-facilitated tours of their settlements; assist in the planning of joint WASH actions.

Phase 4 (September 2015 onwards - scheduled): Communities and enabling actors take WASH action and begin fostering different types of WASH exchange.

Enabling actor engagement

We have engaged with staff from Ministry of Health, Department of Lands, Department of Water Resources, Public Works Department, Utility Regulatory Authority, National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, Port Vila Urban Redevelopment Project, Shefa Provincial Government Council, University of the South Pacific, Cofely, Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Oxfam and Live & Learn Environmental Education.

Project outputs

In the coming months we will share various project outputs, including policy briefs, a WASH marketing manual, peer-reviewed journal articles and various reports.

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