

# Project update

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

November 2014



### Response to the PAR approach

The emphasis of Participatory Action Research (PAR) is on learning through change and action in real-world situations, particularly through engaging the community members and enabling actors (government, non-governmental organisations or private sector) as research participants.

Engaging community members as co-researchers presented initial challenges as participants were most familiar with traditional ways of doing research, through one-way relationships of researchers studying communities as case studies. They were also more familiar with traditional ways of implementing WASH projects, where expert-determined solutions, often including the donation of hardware, are offered to communities. These challenges were overcome through open discussion and participatory activities emphasising the value of communities having a high level of influence and ownership over their WASH solutions. Enabling actors also expressed pleasant surprise that the focus was to listen to their opinions and gain their input to the project, rather than impose particular ideas.

Through this participatory approach, community members and enabling actors are now motivated to “try something innovative” to address the challenges of WASH in informal communities.

### Marketing systems, not only markets

Sanitation marketing as it is commonly implemented in the WASH sector is an approach to develop a market in which an exchange occurs willingly between sellers and buyers through a price mechanism. This is known as a market-based marketing system. However, our research indicates that in WASH, as many as four types of marketing exchange systems exist. In addition to the market-based system, there are *command-based marketing systems*, where the exchange occurs only when approved by an authority, *culturally-determined marketing systems* where the exchange is sanctioned by social traditions, and *non-market based marketing systems*, where the exchange is

brokered through other forms of non-market conventions (e.g. donations, subsidies) championed by non-market institutions. This research aims to identify how to foster any mixture of marketing exchange systems that are sustainable and provide the desired results for communities and enabling actors. This will lead to greater marketing options for CSOs and other enablers to foster community WASH outcomes.

### Research phases and next steps

The research is nearing the end of the first phase of activity, which used several PAR activities to develop a sound understanding of existing WASH situations and the aspirations of community members, particularly with regards their health and well-being. In the next phase, focused on action, we will be facilitating collective discussions amongst communities and enabling actors to build a collective understanding of community WASH priorities and desired outcomes, and to develop action plans for fostering WASH marketing systems in target communities.

### Early research findings of value to CSOs

The first step towards fostering sustainable WASH marketing that is both responsive to local demand and empowers communities and consumers to act transformatively, is to understand a community's WASH situation and priorities. The team has identified a subset of the PAR activities that can be used by CSOs and other WASH implementing organisations to undertake this task in a rapid way that is also participatory (e.g. modified Ladder of Life, Community WASH Walks). The advantage of these PAR activities is that they are inclusive, ensuring the needs and views of marginalised people are considered, and motivational, creating ownership and accountability, by communities and enablers. This recommended approach is currently being further trialed by our partners Live and Learn, through their Australian government CS WASH Fund program in the Western Pacific.

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