

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

## Solomon Islands 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 Solomon Islands we are working with communities at Burns Creek and Gilbert Camp. Both communities lie on the Guadalcanal Province/Honiara boundary, meaning that there is a lot of confusion around land rights and which departments or organizations are responsible for providing services.

## Project phases

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

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

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

Phase 4 (March 2015 onwards): 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 and Medical Services (Environmental Health and Health Promotion Unit), Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey, Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, Solomon Water, the Land Board, Honiara City Council (City Clerk and Health Promotion Unit), Guadalcanal Province (Environmental Health), UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, World Vision, Caritas and Live & Learn Environmental Education.

## Burns Creek Community

In the Burns Creek community we are working with a dedicated group of individuals from Zone 1. Following Phase 3 in March 2015, they have organised themselves into a WASH Target Development Committee (WTDC), and have met several times to determine their aims and advance their action plans. The priorities of the WTDC are 1) sanitation, 2) hygiene and health, 3) water and 4) medical services.

In addressing the sanitation issue, the WTDC has recently been in contact with the Environmental Health Division of Ministry of Health and Medical Services and Honiara City Council to discuss the organisation of training to build concrete toilet slabs

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and risers. They have prepared a proposal requesting funds to assist in buying materials for this training. After the training they propose to seek funds to build 150 toilets in their community. The funds will be used for concrete, mesh wire and plastic inserts, with most other components purchased by households themselves. Labour will be provided by households and the recently trained masons (who will be paid by individual households). There are ongoing discussions about the trained masons beginning a business installing these toilets outside Burns Creek.

The water situation in Burns Creek is also a significant issue. Very few households have a piped connection, and preliminary water quality tests indicate faecal contamination of several drinking water sources. During Phase 3, employees of Solomon Water stated that they are considering reduced fee connections or alternative water delivery methods for informal settlements. Our project will continue to engage with Solomon Water and communicate with the Burns Creek WTDC.

## Gilbert Camp Community

In the Gilbert Camp community we initially tried to engage participants from across the settlement. Despite this, the majority of interest in the project has come from the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) area. Following Phase 3 in March 2015, they have decided that it is unnecessary to form another committee, and will instead bring WASH under the umbrella of the SSEC Works Committee.

They would like the entire Gilbert Camp to prioritise WASH, and feel that the best way of doing this is to create a strong WASH program within the SSEC area, motivating other areas in the settlement to also become involved in WASH activities.

## Both Communities

The WTDC in Burns Creek and the SSEC Works Committee in Gilbert Camp are currently preparing letters for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services requesting they be included in the 2016 budget for the Healthy Settings Program. They are also preparing letters requesting tools to clean up their communities from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in collaboration with Rotary.

## 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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