

2 Stories from rural hygiene promoters in Vanuatu: PHAST, tippy taps and working with men and women

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Context

Within a broader health program, WASH teams of World Vision in Vanuatu are currently supporting long-term projects with about 15 rural communities in the Provinces of Sanma, Tafea and Pentecost in Vanuatu. The projects are carried out in partnership with the Vanuatu Government's Rural Water Supply Program and the Provincial Environmental Health Units. The goals of the projects are to improve health through sustainable water and sanitation facilities and improved health practices. To ensure community ownership (and therefore sustainability) World Vision Vanuatu uses the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) approach to promote safe hygiene and sanitation and community management of water and sanitation facilities. The underlying idea is that no lasting change to people's behaviour will occur unless they understand and believe in the health benefits.

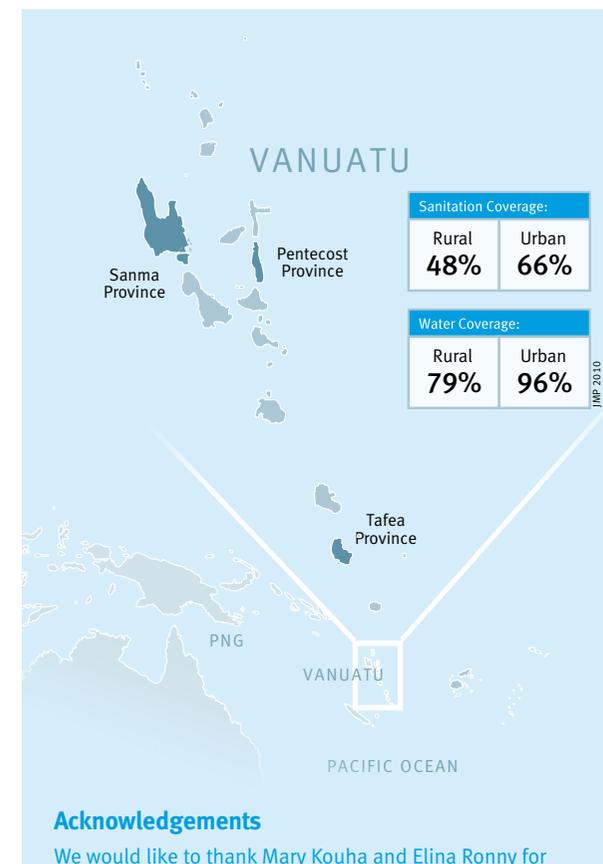
In a PHAST process people participate in groups to discover information, analyse their own situation, work out solutions and make plans to carry out these solutions. PHAST is a seven-step process where each step contains one or more activities. An activity is what the group works through in order to discover information and skills to reach an understanding or take a decision. PHAST is supported by a toolkit of visual aids that are developed locally and used by the facilitators

to help the group work through each activity. The activities involve analysing the health issues in the community including exploring how diseases are being transmitted and effectively blocked, community mapping, three pile sorting (of good, bad and unknown hygiene behaviours), and ranking of technologies in water and sanitation ladders. These activities lead to the final community planning including roles and responsibilities. PHAST is based on adult learning principles. It is proving successful in settings where literacy is low and makes it easier for women to participate alongside men in the Pacific context.

Since early 2007, hygiene promoters (mainly women) have been recruited to the three WASH project teams in each of the provinces. The project teams (including the hygiene promoters) have been trained as PHAST facilitators and as new teams are formed they draw on the skills and experience of the more established teams through mentoring and exchanges. These teams facilitate the seven steps of the participatory planning process with target communities. The result is a community-owned PHAST plan which identifies the target hygiene behaviours, the appropriate technologies to support these and clear responsibilities and roles for achieving their determined goal. Each plan also therefore defines for the project team the supporting role they and the government

partners then provide for the communities over a one to two year period. The plans are facilitated on a rolling basis. For example, on the island of Santo, the team supports only one or two plans per year, giving agreed support in terms of training, technical assistance and contributions to materials. Each plan is based on the community's priorities and setting the plans vary, but commonly include two or three key target behaviours such as handwashing at the critical times, safe disposal of faeces and safe storage of drinking water. They also involve planning for the appropriate technologies to support these behaviours which may be fundraising for community rainwater tanks or a gravity-fed water supply system connecting to tap stands or building VIP toilets and handwashing facilities. In managing their plans, the communities may appoint committees for the different components, appoint volunteer hygiene advocates, set up work teams, undertake fundraising or collect fees for water usage and work with schools and existing groups.

The role of the hygiene promoters is to co-facilitate the PHAST planning process in their teams with the target communities. They then support each community's plan by working with the nominated committees, partners and/or volunteer hygiene promoters in promoting the safe hygiene practices that



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mary Kouha and Elina Ronny for sharing their stories as hygiene promoters, as well as World Vision's WASH teams across rural Vanuatu, whose continued work in encouraging women and men to work together to promote safe hygiene practices provides the basis of this case study. Our special acknowledgement goes to the women, men and leaders who respond so positively to these programs and are making change happen for their communities. The sharing of ideas and learnings within the Vanuatu program is enabled and encouraged by their supporting teams, particularly Simon Boe, Janet Strong and Mike Wolfe, with financial support from World Vision Australia. We would like to acknowledge the very fruitful research partnership between the Institute for Sustainable Futures, International Women's Development Agency, World Vision Vanuatu and Live and Learn Environmental Education Fiji which documented the stories and the gender outcomes from the programs in 2009 with financial support from AusAID. Special thanks to the research team in Vanuatu, led by Dr Juliet Willets, with support from Morena Rigamoto, Jimmy Daniel, Ellen Tangap, Jimmy Kawiell, Jeffrey lausolok, Claire Rowland, and Naomi Carrard.

the community considers the most effective to target. Their work includes training nominated volunteer hygiene motivators and conducting any requested health awareness sessions with groups and schools, often drawing on the visual aids and steps from the PHAST tool kit and providing encouragement. They also play an important role in encouraging and involving communities and groups, and building demand for safe hygiene and sanitation practices before the construction of water supplies as part of the plans. Providing a link between the community and the technicians, they strengthen accountability so that the concerns of women and men are heard and technologies are appropriate.

Sharing two stories of success

The hygiene promoters came together in March 2010 to reflect on their work, share experiences and practices in promoting safe hygiene behaviours, and discuss their roles as members of WASH teams. The promoters came from the islands of Santo and Tanna, working with similar project approaches but in very different teams, communities, cultures and geographical areas. This is reflected in their stories of positive experiences and success.

In Tanna, the hygiene promoter is based in World Vision's provincial office and visits the communities regularly travelling by road. Her stories of success focus on her work in

supporting the communities to implement their PHAST plans through encouraging women and men to use the sanitation facilities and to build tippy taps for handwashing. Tippy taps are simple devices for handwashing with running water. We use recycled plastic containers with a small hole near the cap that are filled with water and tipped with a stick and rope tied through a hole in the cap. The containers are made from locally recycled plastic drinking bottles or bamboo. The promoter worked with the community before the construction of new toilets, to help people take up new hygiene practices:

In Tanna most people are illiterate and we have to go slowly, step-by-step. I can speak the language and we can explain things clearly. I can see the changes from what I have done. Before there were old bush toilets that were open and very overgrown. I just talked with them about cleaning the toilets, planting flowers, showed them how to build the tippy taps. By the time the slab construction started people were ready to be involved. Now they have slabs and they use the toilets well and keep them clean.

The following quote from a man in the community confirms the changes resulting from the promoter's work:

We've experienced a big change in this village, especially hygiene. Before we used to live in the Dark Ages. Houses are now clean because of World Vision's hygiene education. Surrounding the houses are clean, and we've started using the toilets and tippy tap. My desire is that all households will have toilets and tippy taps and keep themselves clean and in good health.

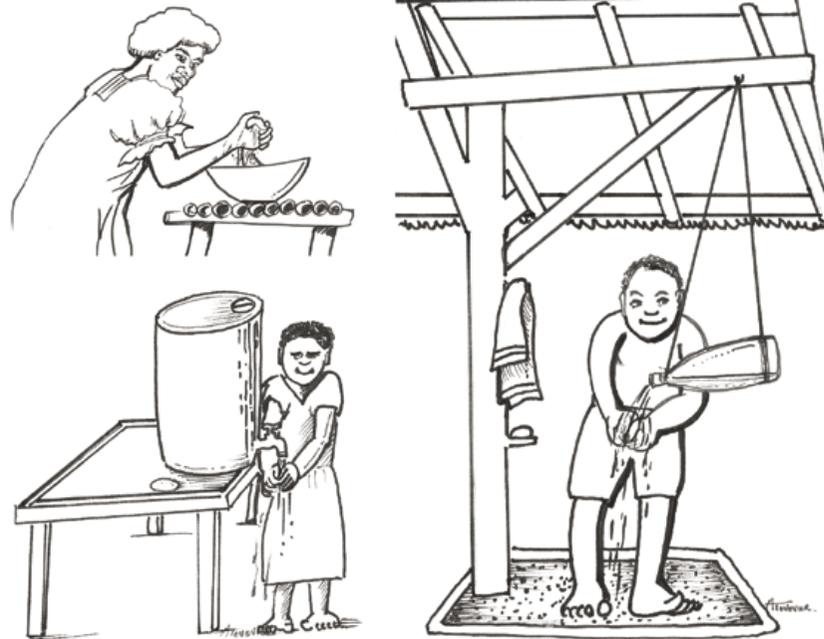
In Santo the female hygiene promoter works with two other male staff as part of a small team that is based for long periods in the inaccessible and isolated North West Coast. Her stories of positive experiences focus on being the only woman working closely with male technical staff as part of the WASH team. She describes the impact of this on the traditional gender division of labour, her own sense of competence and confidence, and the ability of women in the community to imagine women taking on roles alongside men.

When I came in to World Vision I didn't know how to construct all of these slabs. But with the male staff we work as a team. I've learnt how to do all of these things – seat raisers,



Hygiene promoter in Santo facilitating PHAST activities to identify key hygiene practices to target

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Pictures from a tool kit: examples of steps in the handwashing ladder, from a bowl to running water

tap stands, soakaways. I had no idea, so it's a big change. I can do it by myself and help my own community. I don't need to wait for the male staff. When they aren't there I can do it by myself.

When asked why she identified this as a success, she said:

It's a success because I'm a woman and I can do these things. I know in my heart for the other women they are thinking "Yes we can do it".

These successes were then discussed over three days to identify the enabling factors that supported them, and that might be replicated. These factors were clustered around: (a) promoting handwashing practices, and (b) the gender considerations and outcomes.

Climbing the handwashing ladder

On the island of Santo, the team adapted the PHAST planning process by adding an activity to the PHAST step for choosing improved hygiene behaviours and options. They developed a handwashing ladder to use alongside the more traditional water and sanitation ladders. This introduces different types of handwashing facilities, which are then ranked by women and men using their own criteria and values. The idea is that once women and men become familiar and confident with the practice of handwashing, they can work their way up a ladder of facilities (towards safer practices), illustrated with pictures of washing hands with leaves and ashes, a communal bowl of water commonly used in cooking areas, a tippy tap with soap, a recycled drum with a tap, and finally a tap with running water.

The ladder has proved to be an effective tool for discussing and enabling safer

handwashing practices. Sharing the ladder and the tippy tap ideas among the project teams has seen their use spread from Santo to all three of the provinces in which World Vision's projects are located. Many families have adopted tippy taps, showing that it is useful and appropriate technology for the rural areas. It helps encourage safer handwashing, either as a safer step up the handwashing ladder from communal bowls of water or (for many) their initial step on the ladder. The approach supports sustainable hygiene behaviour change, as illustrated by the following quote from a man in Tanna, in the south of Vanuatu:

I have seen a lot of change in my community that can reduce the risk of getting sick; now people have to wash their hands after everything. I've seen many tippy taps with men and women using them and I'm proud of these changes, especially as chairman.

Some families even built structures to protect the (valuable) soap from rain, as shown in the photo on the right.

The success highlights the key role the promoters are playing in linking planning for disease prevention to appropriate technologies and safer handwashing practices.

Working with women and men to promote hygiene

The experience of female hygiene promoters working within male-dominated technical teams, common to many WASH programs, reflects the gendered nature of the work, responsibilities and opportunities. Women work most in the software promotion activities while men deal with the technical hardware activities. The gender imbalance on project

teams and the attitudes of staff regarding gender roles influence the ability of teams to work together and can have both positive and negative outcomes for the projects and the teams. In Santo, the hygiene promoter has a strong working relationship with her team and is proud that she was included in all the activities including operating the geographic positioning system (GPS) and identifying water sources in very challenging terrain.

In Santo we went together to find the water sources, I was very scared and I was the only sister. We had to climb up the rocks.

In Tanna, the hygiene promoter is less supported by the male staff to be involved in the technical activities but has worked closely with men in the community alongside women to promote safer hygiene practices and has trained equal numbers of men and women as hygiene motivators.

The gender roles in the work are similar to those within the communities. The PHAST planning process incorporates a session on the roles of men and women within communities. World Vision has expanded this to include a 24-hour clock about the roles and responsibilities of men and women, raising awareness and encouraging dialogue on the division of labour between men and women. Typically the women's days started earlier, went longer, and were occupied with most of the WASH-related responsibilities within households, while men were more involved in decision-making for these responsibilities and providing construction labour.

Supported by her team, the hygiene promoter in Tanna went beyond the discussion to deal with the imbalance in work loads and provided opportunities for men to be involved alongside



Tippy tap houses



Tippy taps as an appropriate technology for handwashing

women. Her effort to involve men as hygiene advocates has resulted in unexpected positive gender outcomes, with men increasingly sharing household responsibilities and playing a greater role in hygiene (Willetts, *et al.*, 2009). She has been supported by the male members of the team who have encouraged the sharing of roles and responsibilities within WASH committees and brought the message to households.

The International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) and Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) undertook research with World Vision in two of these communities. This showed positive changes and visions for the future. Men in both communities reported increasingly supporting their wives with household activities, sharing the responsibilities and moving away from traditional gender norms.



World Vision Vanuatu has incorporated the 24-hour daily clock activity within the PHAST planning process. The activity helps people discuss and analyse the roles and responsibilities for women and men from sunrise to sunset. This analysis is brought into WASH planning with communities.

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In the words of one of the chiefs:

Previously women were responsible for all household work. But now its time that we share the responsibility – both men and women – to bring upon change in the community.

Household work includes hygiene practices, as one woman shared:

Father is taking more responsibility for teaching the children on how to practice good hygiene in the home and cleanliness. He sends the kids off to wash their hands after the toilet and before handling food and to plant flowers.

In a visioning process with the community about the further changes they would like to see, the men’s visions commonly included this theme of sharing, as reflected by what one group said:

In our vision, a man and a woman attend a World Vision PHAST training workshop about hygiene practices. Both of them learned about hygiene practices and then made plans for how to put these into practice – everyone takes turns at doing different jobs at home. They were sharing jobs; a man and woman together were teaching the kids about the hygiene practices, and the children practice them. The whole family went to visit another family and shared what they’d learned in the workshop. Hygiene practices are to clean around the home, constructing the toilets and then keeping them clean, planting flowers, cleaning dishes, teaching children to wash hands after toilet and before eating or after any work done.

These stories highlight the importance of being aware of gender dynamics and the benefits of including women alongside men in WASH teams and in community activities to

promote safer sanitation and hygiene practices. Through taking a more gender-inclusive approach that seeks to recognise and understand the different skills and contributions of women and men in activities, it is possible to raise awareness of the value of women’s labour and increase sharing of roles and responsibilities. This helps ensure that women’s workloads do not increase as a result of activities to improve hygiene practices. In turn, including men helps improve their own hygiene practices and addresses their roles and responsibilities for sanitation and hygiene.

Conclusion

The next step for the hygiene promoters is to develop their own teaching aids to improve their existing PHAST tool kits for training hygiene motivators within communities. Guidance material is being developed to train field staff on how to integrate gender into their projects and teams. The promoters are now developing hygiene plans tailored to support the practices communities have targeted in their current PHAST plans, involving handwashing at critical times and safe disposal of infant faeces. The promoters are seeking to use positive messages to promote the behaviours, not only messages based on health. The messages will be developed through working with families that currently practice these target behaviours, in order to understand the motivating and enabling factors.

There is increasing appreciation of the roles played by hygiene promoters within the WASH teams, the different contributions of men and women on project teams and within communities and in encouraging the

implementation of the hygiene and sanitation components of a community plan before the installation of water facilities. If communities can understand and appreciate why health and hygiene are vital, they are more motivated to contribute and take the lead in the water supply implementation and maintenance. The handwashing ladders included in the initial PHAST planning stage and later in the promotion illustrate the link the hygiene promoters play between the software and hardware components of projects.

The practical opportunities for exchange and learning among the WASH teams in Vanuatu, and World Vision in PNG and the Solomon Islands are building the capacity of the teams in ways that will benefit the communities in the program. Further emphasis in the future in investing in training for hygiene promoters and valuing their profession equally with the water and sanitation technicians will only strengthen these benefits. At the community level, successes are also being recognised and celebrated through learning and reflection processes that bring target communities together in a broader community that is achieving successes in their goals. The host community shares their experiences and this provides other communities with the opportunity to learn about what worked well, what did not, and how success was achieved.

References

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