

Fund Learning & Reflection Event

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Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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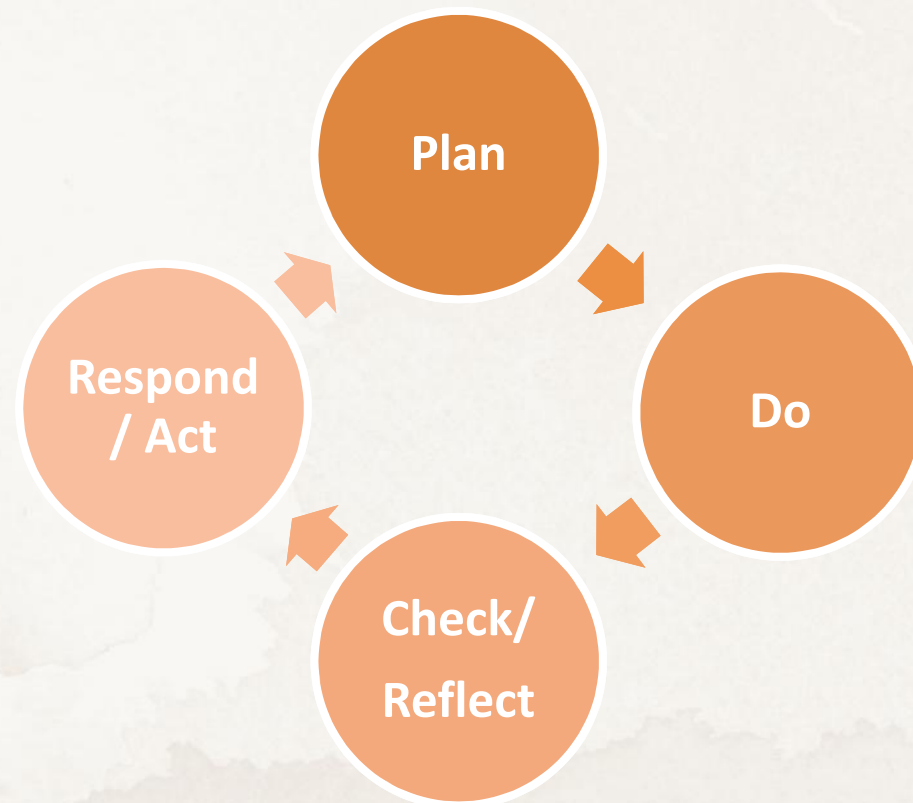
Managing WASH Projects: lessons from implementation

**Action Research in project decision-
making**

Why action research?

Monitoring
Evaluation
Action Research
Response
Learning

Action research cycle



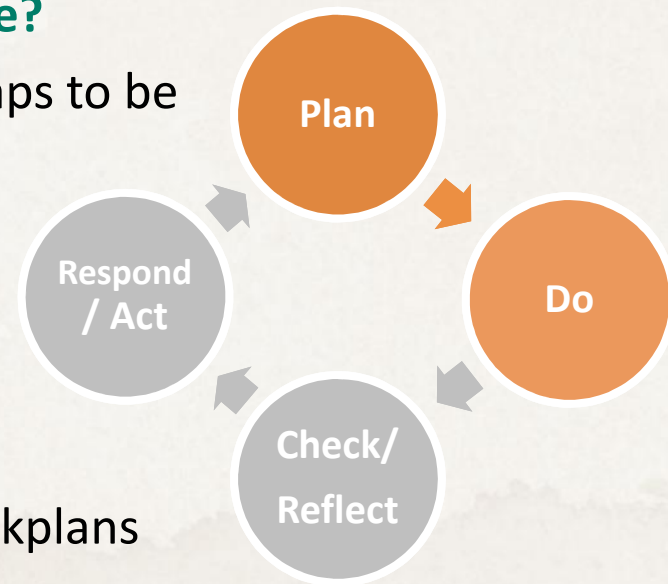
Action research planning

PLAN:

- **Identify issues or challenges that need more understanding**
 - Prioritise and select - is it suitable for action research?
 - Turn the issue into a question
- **What do you already know about this issue?**
 - What are the remaining information gaps to be explored?

DO:

- **What actions will you take?**
 - How will you collect data to answer the question?
 - *Who, when?* Include actions in the workplans



Reflecting and responding

CHECK/REFLECT:

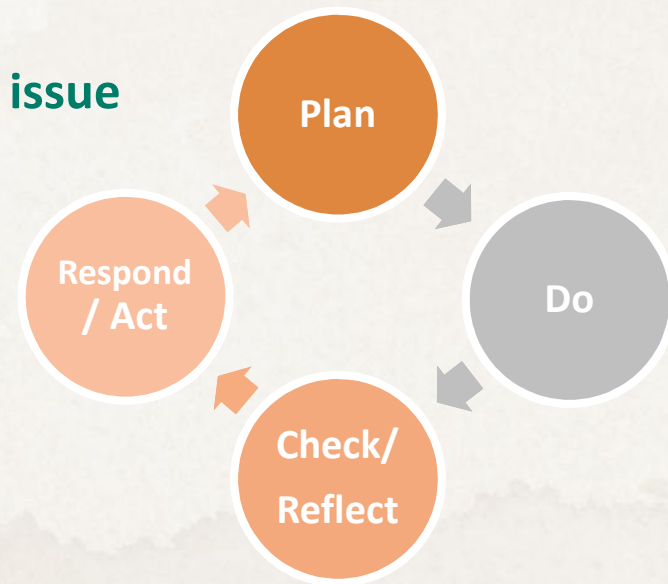
- Capture the results, key findings and learnings
- Do you think the issue is resolved?

RESPOND/ACT:

- What is the way forward in addressing the issue or challenge that was explored?
 - Based on your learnings, what actions will you take?

PLAN:

- Develop a new action research plan
 - What emerging issues or challenges will you investigate next?



Training, mentoring and support for AR



The background features a large, solid green shape on the left side, which overlaps with a white, textured area on the right. The white area has a subtle, organic pattern. In the lower right, there is a smaller, semi-transparent green circle that overlaps with the larger green shape.

Examples of action research

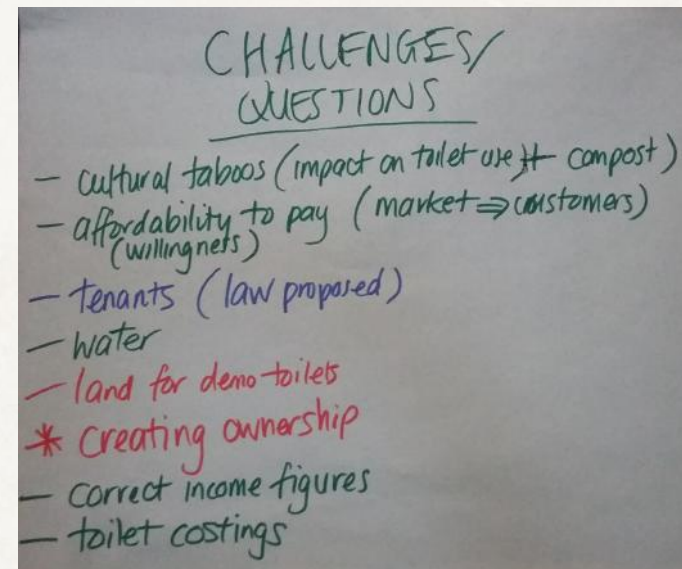
What challenges/problems are we addressing?

Solomon Islands:

Question 1: How do we motivate people to work for the community-based sanitation enterprises (CBSE)?

- What will motivate people to work for the CBSE?
- How well are these strategies working?

Question 2: Are there external stakeholders (e.g. government) who could help to increase CBSE motivation, and how could they do this (for informal settlements)?



What approaches have we used to address the issues?

Solomon Islands

- Discussed roles, responsibilities and expectations with CBSE members
- Conducted pre and post evaluations to determine how members' understandings and expectations change
- Conducted leadership and business training – certificates of completion
- Created a sense of identity: logo, T-shirts, ID cards
- Conducted staff surveys



Key findings

Solomon Islands

- Motivations are different for each community
- Financial Incentives are important
- CBSE internal communications need to be improved
- Cultural obligations and competing priorities can interfere with plans
- Development of logo has helped to build a joint identity and unify CBSE members
- Training certificates of completion were effective in one of the two communities
- Internal conflicts can hinder teamwork
- Regular visits from L&L team are helpful in making CBSE feel supported

What challenges/problems are we addressing?

Vanuatu:

Question 1: Are the marketing techniques effective at making sales?

Question 2: How can other WASH stakeholders contribute to the enabling environment for successful sanitation marketing?

Question 3: What is the best way to motivate the CBSE committee so they can take lead/take ownership of their enterprise?



What approaches have we used to address the issues?

Vanuatu

- Engaged **marketing consultant**, focusing on development of promotion tools
- Conducted individual training needs assessments
- Conducted marketing and sales training with CBSE members
- Discussed roles and responsibilities for sales
- Reviewed current marketing techniques and tested effectiveness through **tactical sales**
- Coaching and mentoring of CBSE members and sales staff
- Developed and launched the **TopWan** brand



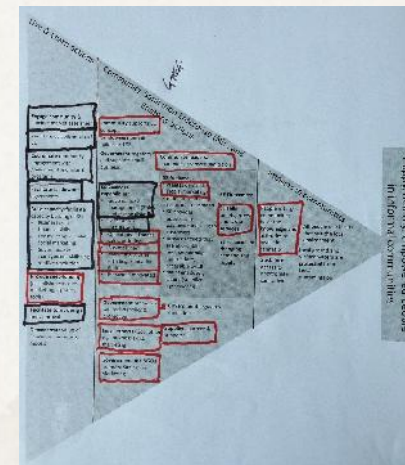
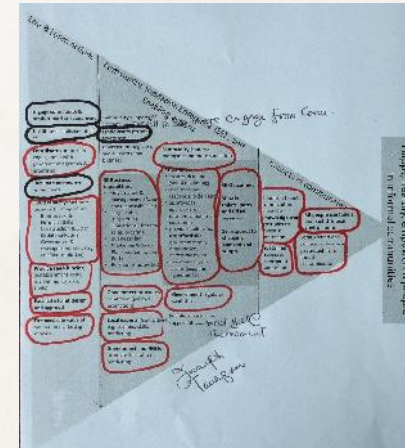
Key findings

Vanuatu

- Understanding **power dynamics and structures** in the communities will help tuning the tactical sales in a way that is socially understood and accepted by the community members, particularly the land owners.
- WASH committee members need to **improve communication** of the right sanitation messages within the existing power structures in the communities.
- The team wants to introduce **saving clubs** in the communities as a new marketing strategy so that toilets can be affordable by groups of families when the single families cannot afford them.
- It is important to carry out **mentoring and coaching** of the CBSE business management in marketing and sales and provide them with opportunities to put into practice what they have learned from the customer service, sales and marketing training.

Lessons Learned

- Action research **covers gaps** that ongoing M&E cannot address
- Conducting action research has been very valuable for deciding **way forward regarding emerging issues** in the program
- When teams understand the importance of action research and evidence-based decision-making, AR actions are not seen as additional work, but as a **smarter way of working**
- Action research and M&E data is very useful to update program's **Theory of Change**
- Regular **reflection activities** (i.e. quarterly reflections) are crucial in identifying learnings, collating evidence and data, and direct decision-making



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