

# Fund Learning & Reflection Event

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# **Social Inclusion**

## **Portable Toilets in Vanuatu**

# Introduction

- **Through the partnership of Live & Learn with Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWB) & NZ a technical advisor has worked with the Community-Based Sanitation Enterprises (CBSEs) in Vanuatu to design and build simple portable toilets.**
- **The toilets were designed for families who are caring for elderly relatives, or family members with disabilities.**
- **This presentation will share the toilet design, and a case study on the use of a portable toilet by a person with a disability.**

# What L&L are working on

- Our technical mentor from EWB, together with construction officers from our 2 CBSEs have put together a simple design for a portable toilet.
- The Portable toilet is a simple plywood box and bucket toilet, designed with the purpose of supporting access to improved sanitation for people with disabilities.



# What L&L are working on

- The portable toilet helps to address some of the challenges that the elderly or people living with a disability (PWD) face in accessing sanitation.



- It is common for toilets to be located outside the house, and the distance and /or terrain can make access very difficult.
- Often PWD can't access an outside toilet alone, and require assistance from carers or family members to access the toilet.

# What L&L are working on

- **Safety is a concern for PWD accessing toilets. Limiting the distance travelled, physical obstacles involved and the need to leave the house reduces the risks involved.**
- **Some of the current sanitation options utilised by PWD are inadequate and unhygienic e.g. a bucket, tin, or plastic bottles.**
- **Privacy is also an issue for PWD accessing sanitation options.**



# L&L's approach

- The CBSEs have made contact with households where a family member has difficulties accessing a toilet and discussed the option of having a portable toilet.
- The CBSE members understand the operations and maintenance of the portable toilet, and were able to explain how it is used and the potential benefits it could provide.
- The consultation services were provided by both CBSEs and the toilets was provided by LLV.
- When handing over the portable toilets to the families the CBSEs gave advice on the use, operation and maintenance of the toilets.



# L&L's approach

- **L&L visited the families again after several weeks to get feedback on how use of the toilets had been going.**
- **The CBSEs also received feedback from the customers on how they can adapt the portable toilet design or the toilet surrounds to enable easier access for the specific users.**
- **The responses were documented and captured in the form of case studies.**

## Case Study 1 - Alice

- Alice suffers from diabetes and in 2012 she required amputation of both of her legs below the knees.
- Alice has a wheelchair but this is usually used outside the house on the veranda, inside she moves around on the floor. The house has woven local mats spread out so she is not lying on the concrete.
- Alice is in a lot of pain as she moves around and when pressure is placed on her legs. To get to and from the wheelchair she moves on to a chair then transfers herself to the wheelchair and vice versa.

## **Case Study 1 - Alice**

- **The house has a pour flush toilet approx. 15m from the house. There is a relatively flat path from the house but after rain it becomes muddy and impassable by wheel chair.**
- **Over the past 5 years the family have intended to make a concrete pathway to the toilet, however, lack of money has prevented this from occurring.**
- **The household does not have access to piped water, they rely on a rainwater tank.**
- **Access to the toilet is difficult in a wheelchair, as the space is too small to allow for manoeuvring of the wheelchair.**
- **Due to the above reasons Alice does not use the outside toilet.**

## Case Study 1 - Alice

- Inside of Alice's room is a small bucket with a plate over the top. This has been her toilet for the past 5 years.
- Alice found it upsetting to discuss this topic, and the bucket option obviously caused her great distress and pain.
- The small bucket needed to be emptied after every use. This was done by all members of the household. Spills often occurred and the family members were required to clean these up.
- It was distressing for the family members to see Alice in pain and struggling to use the toilet.



## Case Study 1 - Alice

The first meeting with Alice was to discuss the use of a portable toilet, potential modifications (like reducing the height), additions such as handrails and how to empty the bucket.

Initially, It was unclear exactly how Alice would move herself from the floor or wheelchair to the toilet but she suggested she would give it a try over a few days and discuss any modifications when we returned.

A handwashing bucket with tap, gloves for cleaning, soap and brush were supplied to make it easier and more hygienic.

## Case Study 1 - Alice

- At the second visit, a handrail was installed to the wall and the steps up to the toilet. This made it much easier for her to get up on to the toilet.
- At the third visit, Alice requested a hand rail on the other side. Getting up, on to the toilet was ok, but she was scared coming down and would slide on her backside.
- Alice had also made 2 pillows to fix to the steps to lessen the pressure on her legs.



# Evidence

- On the third visit, Alice was asked if her new toilet had improved her sanitation situation, she suggested that it was much more comfortable to use and said “mi glad tumas” “ mi happy”.
- Alice also mentioned that It reduced her physical pain by minimising the pressure on her legs.
- Judging by Alice’s reaction, the Portable Toilet will have a beneficial impact on her daily life.
- A handwashing bucket with tap, gloves for cleaning, soap and brush were supplied to make it easier and more hygienic.





# Tips or Lessons Learned

The approach is going well so far, and we intend to keep promoting alternatives to address individuals needs in regard to safe, affordable sanitation options.

However there have been challenges:

- Talking about toilets is a taboo subject in Vanuatu, and people are hesitant to discuss toilet use in general. It takes time to develop relationships and trust with people before they openly communicate their needs
- Finding appropriate times to visit has also been a challenge.
- Obtaining comments from various stakeholders including: Ministry of Health, WASH Sector and Vanuatu Society for Disabled People (VSDP)

# Further Resources

Have you produced guidelines, toolkits, etc to share your work? Please list references and materials others could access for further information. If not, were there resources you found particularly useful in undertaking this work?

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