

World Vision

WASH in Western Province Papua New Guinea



Left: Following Healthy Islands sensitisation in Middle Fly.
Right: Household toilets in Middle Fly

Project objectives & approaches

Establish and mentor Provincial and District level WASH committees to drive the Provincial WASH plan and coordinate WASH stakeholders. Due to a funding freeze of the Provincial Govt (PoHD) operational funds, the Provincial WASH committee cannot form at this stage. We worked closely with the District health teams and other partners and have established the South Fly WASH committee.

Improved hygiene practices and equitable access to safe water and sanitation by establishing community committees to create and sustain community demand for better hygiene and sanitation. The Healthy Islands approach (a participatory community engagement, planning, and monitoring concept) was used. Significant results have been seen, including planning and building a "Model Healthy Village", high level of community ownership, people building their own toilets with tippy taps and women in leadership roles.

Lessons learnt

The remote communities we work in have been missed out on vital government services such as education, agriculture and basic health and WASH services. Their life is spent paddling many kilometers on the rivers to seek medical assistance for their family and education for their children.

The ground in Middle Fly, and to some extent South Fly, is extremely muddy with a water table just below the ground most of the year due to sea level rising and monthly high tides. Digging latrine pits which do not wash away and erecting water supply and toilet structures which do not sink is difficult and has required innovation and persistence. In Middle Fly, the team along with the community tried several household dry pit toilet designs before arriving at the current solution which uses locally sourced natural materials such as Black palm and Nippa palm and are elevated so they withstand the constant flooding.

In the community of Bamu, the community has taken the decision to relocate from the river banks and low areas to avoid the rising sea-levels and high tides because of the awareness raised during the disaster risk reduction training during our Healthy Islands discussions. This will involve moving schools and aid posts and approximately 200 homes.

We are proud of:

There have been some changes toward gender equity as a result of the project: most visibly in the 'Change Agent Committees' (CACs) where at least one or two women hold senior positions. This is the first time in these communities that women have held leadership positions and the female representatives on some of the CACs have noticed a change in attitudes. The woman from Murr Lagoon said that "my experience as one of the change agents is that I'm getting more respect from the community. Now people listen to me when I say something."

Project challenge

Providing ongoing secretarial, governance and financial support to the Western Province Provincial WASH Committee. Unfortunately, due to a funding freeze of government operational funds (due to an ongoing court case) the Western Province Health Department cannot form Health and WASH committees at this stage.



Sustainability

As there are no government or private sector services reach these remote communities, it's critical that any infrastructure installed is made of good quality with robust parts and locally sourced materials are used as much as possible and that the community level "Change Agent Committees" are well equipped to be able to:

- Operate and maintain rainwater harvesting systems and toilet facilities;
- Maintain the "change of mindset" in communities for healthier living, better hygiene and sanitation practices following the Healthy Islands approach and CLTS triggering;

- Implement and monitor community plans;

As cash is limited (very few people work for money), it's important to advocate for spare parts for WASH infrastructure be supported by the ward committee representative and included in the community's five-year development plan.

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