

How do we better address gender in Pacific water and sanitation initiatives?

Research project: Making the invisible visible- documenting successes, enablers and measures of engendering water and sanitation initiatives in the Pacific to inform policy and practice

VANUATU CASE STUDY

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Summary

The case study presented in this document forms a part of a larger research project being undertaken by Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in partnership with International Women's Development Agency, Live and Learn Environmental Education (Live & Learn) Fiji and World Vision Vanuatu (WVV). The research is supported by AusAID through the Australian Development Research Awards grants program. The research project concerns how gender equality can be supported and evaluated within the context of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs in the Pacific. The research incorporates two case studies in Melanesian communities engaged with non-government organisation (NGO) WASH programs in Fiji (July 2009) and Vanuatu (October 2009) that emphasise community engagement strategies.

Based on the findings the project will produce evidence-based practical tools to guide design, implementation and measurement of gender equality outcomes to support WASH practitioners. This case study report presents the research methods and empirical findings of the Vanuatu case study. At a later stage, this empirical evidence will be contextualised into the theory and practice of gender equality, and provide the raw material for developing guidance for practitioners on improving their practice in this area.

Gender equality outcomes identified by participants in Vanuatu communities are summarised below. These were the outcomes on which women and men placed particular value and importance. They were repeatedly mentioned through the multiple research activities of story-telling, discussion, prioritisation and visioning and some were assessed through the participatory quantification activity.

1. Positive changes in gender relations at the family and/or household level

- Increased respect given to women by husbands and other men in the household
- Changes in gender division of labour with men taking on an increasing role in hygiene in their home to support their wives

Improvements in the dynamics at the family or household level and consisted of several elements were reported. These included increased respect and support given to women by men as well as changes in the gendered division of labour, with men increasingly sharing household responsibilities and playing a greater role in hygiene.

2. Reduction in violence at the household level

In one community there had been a reduction in arguments about water management. A major improvement in relationships between wives and their husbands had resulted as improved access to water removed friction points that previously led to family disputes. These disputes often arose when women requested assistance from their husbands to fetch water, and at times resulted in violent responses from husbands against their wives. Such arguments and violence were reported to have been dramatically reduced with the new availability of water.

3. Positive changes in gender relations at the community level

- Recognition of women's hard work in the community
- Increased trust in women

Men's attitudes of men towards women at the community level had reportedly changed. As part of the WASH projects, women's labour and contribution at the community level through the water and sanitation projects and in other community work was strongly recognised and valued by men. Men saw women as trustworthy in contributing to community events and labour and both women and men noted that women were the first to respond to calls for community meetings and work and had prioritised water and sanitation in the initial discussions with WVV that led to the projects. Based on this recognition and the value placed on women's contributions, men had increased their respect for women which in turn led to valuing their voice in decision-making, discussed further as a separate outcome below.

4. Women's inclusion in decision making processes in their community

- Women taking on leadership roles for the first time in their community
- Women's inclusion in committees and decision making processes
- Increased space and support for women's voice to be heard at community level

This outcome of the project relates to changes in women's involvement in positions of responsibility and in decision-making more broadly. The project, with its participatory planning processes (explicitly involving women and men) and advocacy for gender balance in water and sanitation committees, had created some important 'firsts' in increasing recognition of women's right to have a voice in decision-making. Women reported that they had taken on leadership roles for the first time within their community, noting that this was positive in terms of their self-confidence and sense of growing empowerment and further led to increased respect for women within the broader community. Men indicated that they had become more supportive of making space for women's voices in community decision-making and recognised that lack of self-confidence at times prevented women from sharing their perspectives and views. Men's support for including women was considered to have stemmed from the previous outcome (increased recognition by men of women's contribution to the community and increased trust in women).

5. Women's labour in collecting water reduced and their practical need for water, hygiene and sanitation facilities satisfied

This outcome is the most common reported gender outcome of water, sanitation and hygiene programs (however as is evident from the above, it is only one of many possible outcomes). It includes the reduction in physical labour associated with collecting and carrying water to homes, the satisfaction of women's practical gender need for water, sanitation and hygiene in their daily lives as care-givers in their families.

Acknowledgements

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Background

The case study presented in this document forms a part of a larger research project being undertaken by Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS in partnership with International Women's Development Agency, Live and Learn Environmental Education (Live & Learn) Fiji and World Vision Vanuatu in 2009-10, supported by AusAID through an Australian Development Research Award.

The research concerns how gender equality can be supported and evaluated within the context of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs in the Pacific. It is based on the premise that gender equality is central to effective and sustainable water and sanitation initiatives, and an important outcome of such initiatives, though rarely measured as such. It recognises the fundamental link between Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 to promote gender equality and empower women and the targets associated with MDG 7 to reduce by half the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

The almost universal gap between commitment to gender equality and the outcomes of gender mainstreaming is amplified in the WASH sector. In the Pacific region there is limited published research exploring gender equality results. There is an absence of resources that consider the intersection between gender and WASH and the cultural and contextual factors influencing the implementation and effectiveness of programs.

The research incorporates case studies in Melanesian communities engaged with non-government organisation (NGO) WASH programs in Fiji (July 2009) and Vanuatu (October 2009) that emphasise community engagement strategies. With reference to these case studies the research will investigate three main areas:

1. What kinds of gender outcomes are being achieved?
2. What are the relative strengths of different approaches for integrating gender? What strategies, steps and activities work well to promote gender equality? What enabling contextual and cultural factors can help?
3. How can we measure the effectiveness of the strategies being used in terms of gender outcomes?

Based on the findings, the project will produce evidence-based practical guidance materials to guide design, implementation and measurement of gender equality outcomes to support WASH practitioners. In addition, the case studies will identify implications with regard to strategic integration of gender into water and sanitation initiatives and implications for meaningful measurement of aid effectiveness in terms of gender outcomes in the Pacific and elsewhere. Finally, the outcomes of the research aim to influence the policy and practice of Australian, Pacific and regional actors focused on improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

This case study report presents empirical findings from the Vanuatu case study. At a later stage, this empirical evidence will be contextualised into the theory and practice of gender

equality, and will also form the raw material for developing guidance materials for practitioners on improving their practice in this area.

Introduction

The purpose of this case study report is to present research findings regarding gender equality outcomes in two communities in Vanuatu. Both communities have been engaged in water, sanitation and hygiene projects facilitated by World Vision Vanuatu using the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) methodology (Simpson-Herbert et al. 1997). The case study report describes the research methodology and then explains gender equality outcomes identified by communities.¹ The enabling factors that contributed to these outcomes are also described, including innate characteristics of the community and factors related to the approach used by World Vision Vanuatu in their projects. The case study concludes by discussing the findings and clarifying how they will be used in the next stages of the research.

Context

The research involving World Vision Vanuatu's projects in the case study communities was facilitated between 6 and 16 October 2009. The two communities have been re-named 'Nanen' and 'Puluan' in this report to protect the anonymity of participants. They are rural Melanesian communities on the island of Tanna, with populations of approximately 602 and 259 people and high levels of illiteracy. Within communities of Tanna, custom is considered to be strong and upholds males in dominant positions as leaders, chiefs and decision makers.

World Vision Vanuatu has been developing its community engagement approach to WASH since 2004 using PHAST. PHAST is a participatory planning approach suitable for low literacy groups to promote hygiene, sanitation and community management of water and sanitation facilities. The PHAST community planning process, involving 64 community members, had been facilitated in Nanen in October 2008 as part of the Tanna Wota Hemi Laef Project and in Puluan, involving 65 community members, in January 2008 as part of the earlier Tanna Water and Sanitation Project. The reports document approximately equal numbers of women and men participating. Participants were then supported to implement community plans led by local committees with World Vision providing technical support, materials and encouragement. The approach aimed to facilitate and encourage women's participation in the community planning process and on the committees and, to support this, included a gender awareness process with male leaders.

¹ Whilst a significant portion of time was spent examining NGO staff perceptions of gender equality and their experiences and stories drawn from their work, this case study is confined to discussion of outcomes surfaced by the communities themselves and analysis of NGO perspectives will be presented at a later date.

In Nanen the community plans include a rainwater harvesting system, Ventilated Improved Pit Toilets (VIP;s) with Tippy Tap² hand washing facilities, male and female hygiene promoters, community fundraising and a water and sanitation committee with female representation (although not balanced). The committee amalgamated into one development committee in the second year. The project is ongoing and is also integrated with World Vision's broader community development Tafea Program, which includes a governance project to support the committees. In Puluau, the community plans involved rehabilitating and extending a direct gravity-fed water system, VIP toilets and to a lesser extent Tippy Tap hand washing facilities and hygiene promotion. The original two committees (Water; Sanitation) have several women representatives, and were active and functioning. Currently there are no other World Vision supported activities being undertaken and given the remote location of this community the amount of World Vision support overall was lower than Nanen, and community ownership was consequently higher with less dependency on the NGO.

Methodology

Research approach

The research used a strengths-based approach that is informed by principles of empowerment, appreciation and participation. The intention is for the research to build on existing strengths and be a learning process for all involved. For the participant organisations, this is intended to lead to a stronger focus on gender, and increased capability to integrate gender into water, sanitation and hygiene projects.



The following principles and ways of thinking about research influenced how the research was approached and the choice of research methods.

1. **Context is critical and should shape conceptions of gender equality and equity.** While the research team had developed preliminary ideas about the relationship between gender and WASH (for instance those described in the Background section), we aimed to avoid imposing these perspectives. We therefore *avoided assuming conceptions* of gender equality and equity and instead sought to generate dialogue about women and men's roles, relationships and specific experiences, in order to enable research participants to define the frame of investigation.
2. **Focus on strengths and appreciation.** The research process sought to empower both NGO staff and community participants to address gender equality. It therefore rested

² Tippy Taps are a simple device for hand washing with running water that uses 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.

strongly on the philosophy and process of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999) and the underlying belief that people move in the direction in which they focus. That is, if people focus on problems, then they will see problems. If they focus on strengths and opportunities then they will build on and towards these. Our approach explicitly sought to expose and build on the existing strengths in NGO staff and in community participants, to promote learning and action from the inquiry process, and to maintain a constructive focus in the dialogues that took place.

3. **Transdisciplinarity and a commitment to research that contributes to resolving societal issues.** The broad type of research that underlies the approach is transdisciplinarity, which is characterised by an explicit aim to contribute to resolving a societal issue or problem (Wickson et al, 2006), in this case contribution to better integrating gender concerns into Pacific WASH programs. Such research supports an evolving research methodology, allowing it to be shaped by the context, partners and participants. The researchers actively engage with these stakeholders as part of a mutual learning process supporting changes in perspectives on gender amongst NGO staff and the participating communities.

4. **Mixed method design.** The research included both qualitative and quantitative components, which reflects a pluralistic epistemological base, valuing each element for a different purpose. The qualitative component was based on an inductive, interpretive approach seeking conceptions from the perspective of research participants. The quantitative component involved translating emerging concepts into scales and categories such that empirical evidence within a given community could be assessed through participatory quantification of frequency of response (Mayoux and Chambers 2005).

Research methods

The research took place over two days in each community, with timing negotiated to suit the research participants. The processes were facilitated by World Vision Vanuatu staff utilising a facilitator's guidebook developed by the research team during workshops held immediately prior to community research visits.

Proceedings in each community began with formal welcomes and an explanation of the background to and purpose of the research and ethics issues related to privacy and confidentiality. The World Vision Vanuatu projects that had been conducted in the community were discussed to position the research as investigating outcomes associated with those projects, before proceeding with the main research activities below. The first three activities were conducted in separate women's and men's groups.

Paired (or small group) interviews: Sharing stories about positive experiences

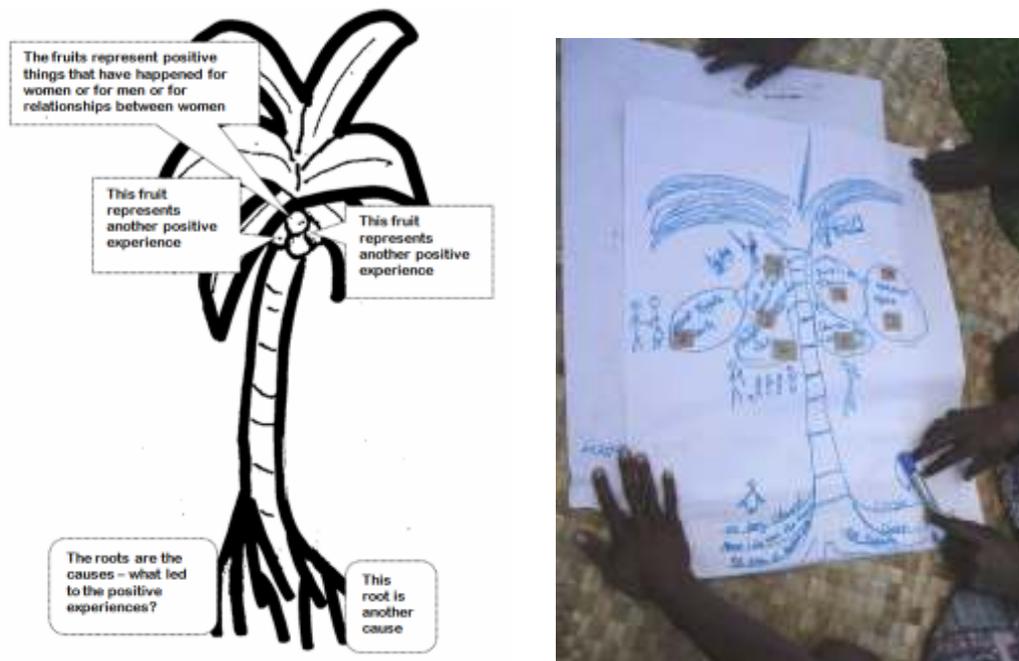
The first activity is based on 'discovery' interviews commonly used in Appreciative Inquiry. This process involves sharing positive experiences that have happened for women and for men and for relationships between women and men as a result of the World Vision Vanuatu projects and then identifying the factors that made these positive experiences possible. Participants were asked to interview one another with the following prompt questions:

Describe an example of something that happened during the period World Vision Vanuatu worked with your community that really made you feel good about yourself in your role (as a

woman/as a man) or in your relationships. What were some things that helped make this example possible?

Larger group report back and synthesis: Drawing a tree with fruits as outcomes and roots as causes

The second activity involved reporting stories back to a broader group (8-15 people), identifying from each of these stories the main positive experience being expressed (which was usually a change, or an 'outcome') and the factors that contributed to that positive experience. Not all outcomes identified by community participants were specifically gender outcomes. In these cases,, men and women were prompted to consider what was good about the outcome they suggested, for women, and for men. The outcomes and their causes were recorded on large sheets of paper as indicated below using a method proposed by Mayoux (2003).



Ranking exercise: Which outcomes are most important and why?

Participants were asked to rank the outcomes identified (the fruit) in order of importance to them. The discussion that took place during the ranking process was documented, as was the final ranking and the group's explanation. Separate rankings were undertaken for the household level and the community level.

Whole group presentation and discussion: Sharing women's and men's group contributions

An activity to present and share the discussions that had been conducted up to this point between the women's and the men's groups then took place. Facilitators encouraged discussion about significant issues arising and particularly any points of difference between the group's perceptions.

Initial collaborative analysis

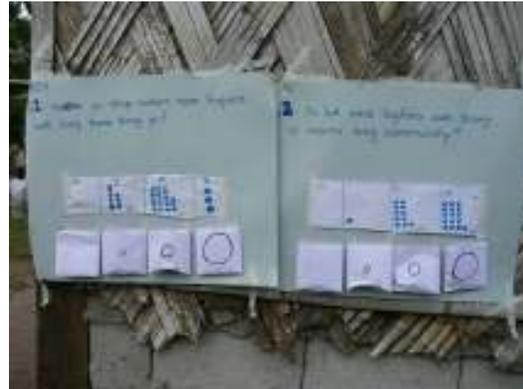
An initial analysis based on the outcomes raised in the stories, trees and ranking exercises was conducted to identify pertinent issues for examination using the subsequent participatory quantification activity.

Quantification activity: How much change has there been for you?

The quantification activity was designed to reveal how common the identified gender outcomes were. Two sets of questions were developed, one for women, and one for men, with many questions common to both groups. A participatory activity similar to pocket-voting³ was utilised, with each question on a separate large card on the wall, and a scale of answers as follows:

- Same as before
- Small change
- Big change
- Very big change

Participants were given different coloured paper depending on age (youth, older). Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and based on their own personal views and experiences and voted in privacy without others watching. After all participants had 'voted', tallies were made and represented visually so that participants could directly consider the results. The research team facilitated dialogue about interesting findings arising from the activity was facilitated, particularly pointing out where women's and men's perceptions about the same issue differed.



Group visions: What would be even better outcomes?

In separate groups of women and men, participants considered what would be even better gender outcomes in terms of how water, sanitation and hygiene are handled in their homes and communities. Participants then chose certain aspects of this vision to prepare and present a role play to the combined group of men and women.

Collaborative analysis by the research team: What gender outcomes are being valued?

The research team analysed the data collected during the above activities and discussions. Each member of the research team was asked to consider:

³ The use of cloth or paper pocket charts is a participatory method to examine a community's views, practices or behaviours on an individual basis. Individuals can vote using vote using tins or pots, or place drawings or photographs showing selected behaviours on the pocket chart. Privacy is needed to ensure accuracy in voting.

1. What three outcomes do you think the women/men are most valuing? Provide evidence to support your view from the stories, trees, ranking or visions.
2. In what areas was there a diversity of views amongst the women/men? (e.g. where some women held one view and other women held a different view)
3. What do you see as the main overlaps where women and men have similar views?
4. In what areas do women and men hold different views or perceive situations differently?

A group discussion based on the research team's answers to these questions resulted in agreement on a set of core gender outcomes that the group believed community participants were valuing.

Participants (Sample)

The numbers of participants in each community are noted in the table below. Ranges reflect the minimum and maximum number of participants in each community at different stages of the research.

	Number of participants	
	Nanen Village	Puluan Village
Women	29-33	17-18
Men	29	20-24



Limitations and challenges

The research involved some of the typical challenges of fieldwork at the community level. This meant little control over participant numbers, which in the first community were slightly larger than expected and therefore methods had to be devised to ensure active participation within the group.

Another challenge was leading community participants to discuss issues of gender, and yet doing so without providing them with a working definition of what we were looking for, due to the need to avoid assumptions about which gender outcomes should be included or considered. The use of multiple methods building from the first activity of open questioning and storytelling worked well in eliciting community views, and wherever possible, facilitators avoided asking leading questions.

Conversations took place in Bislama and local languages (and in some cases some use of French), and therefore there is inevitable loss in translation. This was overcome to the greatest extent possible by assigning note-takers for each activity and a daily debrief was used to capture notes in English of the proceedings. Questions were translated from English into Bislama and then back into English by a different member of the research team to check how well the intended meaning was conveyed.

The research approach, with its intentional focus on appreciation, did not seek to uncover negative gender outcomes. This approach is justified on the grounds that by focusing on the positive outcomes, the research will assist in moving the situation in a positive direction.

Focusing on positive outcomes also prevented the study from becoming or being perceived as an assessment or evaluation of World Vision Vanuatu projects. It is acknowledged that negative gender outcomes which might have been surfaced by a more evaluative approach could also provide useful information about how best to approach gender equality in the program context.

The gender analysis of outcomes was undertaken with NGO staff only, due to time limitations. Ideally, the analysis would have been done with participants from the two communities so that practical and strategic gender needs could be defined from the perspective of the women and men involved.

Methods of analysis

The first method of analysis was collaborative analysis with researchers and NGO staff as described above. In addition, a more systematic analysis of detailed notes taken during the research was conducted using Nvivo software (Version 8) following the fieldwork. The notes were coded according to the identified gender outcomes and enabling factors, and any additional points of interest noted. It should be noted that stories and quotes that have been extracted from the notes are paraphrased in English and not necessarily the exact language used by participants. The quantitative component findings were entered into Excel, however due to lack of significant patterns amongst youth and older participants, only aggregate data has been included. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative findings were considered against one another, and have been presented in this report in combination.

Findings

Gender outcomes valued by women and men in the communities

The following positive gender outcomes were identified through the research activities:

1. Positive changes in gender relations at the family or household level
 - Increased respect given to women by husbands and other men in the household
 - Changes in gender division of labour with men taking on an increasing role in hygiene in their home to support their wives
2. Reduction in violence at the household level
3. Positive changes in gender relations at the community level
 - Men's recognition of women's hard work
 - Men's increased trust in women
4. Women's inclusion in decision making processes in their community
 - Women taking on leadership roles for the first time in their community
 - Women's inclusion in committees and decision making processes
 - Increased space and support for women's voice to be heard at community level
5. Women's labour in collecting water reduced and their practical need for water, hygiene and sanitation facilities satisfied

These particular outcomes are chosen for discussion as they were interpreted as the outcomes on which women and men placed particular value and importance. They were repeatedly mentioned through the multiple research activities of story-telling, discussion,

prioritisation and visioning and some were assessed through the participatory quantification activity.

Positive change in gender relations at the family and/or household level

This outcome is about improvements in the dynamics at the family or household level and consisted of several elements. It incorporates increased respect and support given to women by men as well as changes in the gendered division of labour, with men increasingly sharing household responsibilities and playing a greater role in hygiene.

This outcome of improved relationships within the home was valued in both communities, although different aspects were visible in each. The main aspects of this outcome are described below in terms of increased respect for women by their husbands and men taking on roles in hygiene in the home. These are discussed in turn below.

Increased respect for women by their husbands and other men in the household

According to the women in Puluau, their husbands had become more proud of their families and homes now that they were clean and healthy, and this had impacted on their respect for their wives. With improved access to water, and hygiene and sanitation promotion there was a reported improvement in the health of children, increased bathing and improved household cleanliness:

Now that we have water the dispensary is no longer full. We used to have too much sickness, especially the children. Now all our yards are clean, we have good health and hygiene (Puluau woman)

This increase in health and happiness within homes has also improved relations within the household. According to the women, the men were able to feel proud of their family and of their home, and thought that women were doing an improved job in their role as home-maker and carer. Whilst the conception of women as the primary care-givers remains unchanged, the increased respect for women meant that relationships were improved, and in some cases this allowed women greater ability to negotiate the sharing of more roles in the home. In the example below, new awareness resonated with and was legitimated by spiritual teachings, combining to change one man's attitude towards his wife:

Awareness was a big change. I also read in the bible that I must help my wife. Now I help her cook if she is tired, I help bring the water and care for the children. Before, everything was dirty. It's important to respect your wife, your mother, and women. (Puluau man)

The quantitative evidence from Puluau supports this qualitative evidence, confirming that 88% women and 81% men (answering the question with regard to their own relationship) thought there had been a very big change in men's respect for their wives.

The increased respect was to some extent mutual, in that 93% of women proposed that they felt a very big change in increased respect for their husband, though correspondingly only 60% of men felt there had been a very big change in this area in that women respected their husbands more. Related to this is the notion of improved communication between husbands and wives. In Nanen, rather than focusing on respect between husband and wife, stories focused more around improved communication in their relationships, and the quantitative evidence found some degree of change, with 54% of women and 48% of men noting a very big change in this area.

Changes in gender division of labour with men taking on an increasing role in hygiene in their home to support their wives

This outcome was evident to some extent in both communities, but more strongly in Nanen than Puluau. In Nanen the hygiene promotion had intentionally reached men as well as women and included training on sharing roles and responsibilities.



Men in both communities shared how they increasingly supported their wives with household activities, sharing the responsibilities and moving away from traditional gender norms:

I share in all the work in the house except for grinding to make lap-lap - if you don't believe me you can ask my wife (Nanen man).

It is very true that the husband has changed and is helping his wife a lot with home duties. Even making the lap-lap (Puluau man).

Sometimes men went to the nakamal⁴ and sat there drinking kava thinking that he is an important man, but now he helps his wife very closely (Puluau man).

The message of sharing roles and responsibilities was particularly supported by a chief in Nanen who commented to his community during the research that:

Previously women were responsible for all household work. But now you must share the responsibility – both men and women – to bring about change in the community (Nanen male chief).

The sharing of labour and changing gender roles was seen as contributing to improved relations in the home:

Not only mothers make life easy at home. Because I also believe in myself as a father, contributing to making mother's work easier, resulting in easy life at home (Puluau man).

Water and sanitation information helped improve our lives, it also helps strengthen our relationship in our home, especially family, because we now share responsibility. In the community, we now work more closely together (Puluau woman).



The extent of the change for this outcome is a little unclear. In the voting process in Nanen⁵ all of the men indicated that there had been some positive change in terms of their increased role in hygiene in the home, with 62% considering it to be a big change (and a further 10% a very

⁴ Nakamal is the men's traditional meeting place.

⁵ This question wasn't asked in the voting process in the other community (Puluau) since men playing an increased role in home activities hadn't been repeatedly raised as an important outcome.

big change). This was supported by the women of whom 54% voted that there had been a big change (and a further 22% a very big change) in men playing an increased role in hygiene in their homes. This evidence should be interpreted with caution however as it may be overly optimistic since the visions offered an alternative view. The visions of the future which were acted out in role-play focused very much on men taking on roles in the household (waking early in the morning, preparing breakfast or other meals, sharing work equally with women and taking roles as delegated by their wives) and the discussion that followed these visions revealed that these visions of changes were *hoped for* rather than widely realised as yet. The following comments are self-explanatory in this regard:

If this is how it is in the future, then there will be no more quarrelling or fighting (Nanen woman).

It is good that in the future men should practice what the men in this role play were doing (Nanen man).

If wife and husband practice this, I will be glad and will not have to resolve domestic disputes anymore (Nanen male chief).

Reduction in violence at the household level

The rehabilitation of the gravity fed water system in one community had resulted in a major improvement in relationships between wives and their husbands, removing a friction point that often resulted in household disputes about water management. In particular, disputes arose when women requested assistance from their husbands to fetch water. Often their requests were refused and at times men responded to these requests with violence against their wives.

This outcome was evident in Puluang where both women and men explained that having improved access to water had significantly reduced stress, disputes and violence perpetrated by husbands against wives.

Water has solved family conflicts, especially violence in homes because most violence happens just because of laziness to fetch water by men. And now we can see happiness in the home, just because of availability of water. Most of the fighting is only about water (Puluang man).

Previously at the end of the working day when men were preparing to drink kava in the nakamal there would be conflict:

... this violence happens especially at the time for kava (Puluang woman).

I used to *rau rau* (fight) with my wife and hit her because water was not available. She would ask me to fetch water late afternoon. I would say "no, its my time to go to the nakamal". If she insisted I would fight back and hit her. Now she doesn't need me to carry the water so I can go to the nakamal and we don't fight (Puluang male leader).

When women requested support from their husbands in terms of collecting water and bathing the children it would result in arguments and reportedly the husband would use violence against the wife:

When the water was not here every time I went to the garden and I came back I had to get firewood and help in the kitchen and feed the animals. Then my wife used to tell me to get some water. I would say it's too much work and I would get angry, we would fight and I would hit her (killim). We used to reuse the water 2-3 times. The kids used to be at the clinic all the time. Since the water has come the kids are healthy, there's less work, I can spend more time in the garden and no more fighting with my wife. Now when I come from work the dinner is ready. If there was no water we would still be fighting (Puluan male leader).

Women do a lot of work and they are tired. When they ask for help sometimes men hit them (Puluan older man).

The frequency or breadth of this outcome across different families and relationships was tested through the voting process and results are shown in Figure 1 below. When women and men were asked, “since the World Vision Project is there a change in how much you fight with your husband/wife in relation to household water management” all respondents agreed there had been a change, with 83% of women and 77% of men considering it to be a *very big change*. Only one male respondent and 6 female respondents voted that the question was not applicable as there had not been any fighting in their household over water (indicated by a ‘never’ vote).

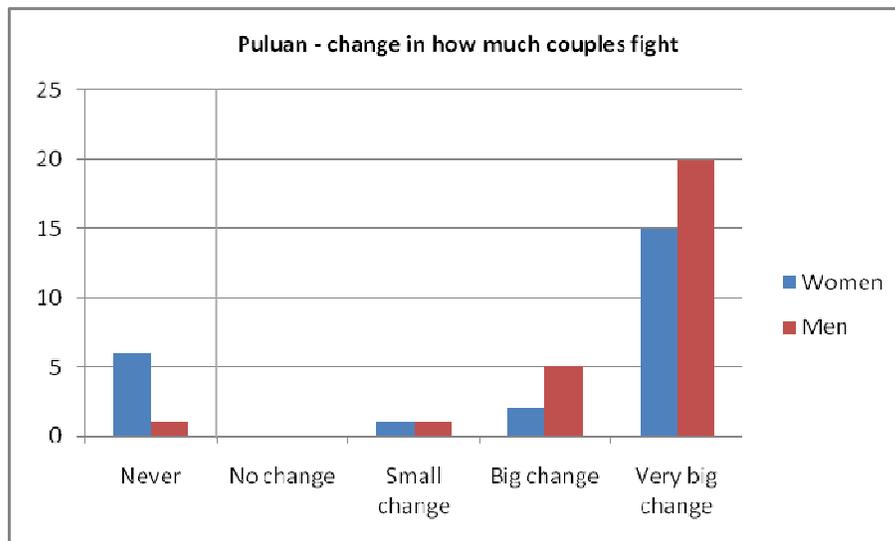


Figure 1 Puluan – Change in how much couples fight since the World Vision project

Discussions around the sustainability of this outcome if water management issues arose again in the future were inconclusive. In a group dialogue about this matter, one male leader proposed that if the men meant what they had said in their voting process (that is, that they had increased their respect for their wives and were helping more at home etc.), then they would help with carrying the water. In addition, the above-mentioned improved gender relations between men and women could be conceived to contribute to an improved situation in the future, however this would need to be tested to be ascertained.

Positive change in gender relations at the community level

This outcome concerns changes in the attitudes of men towards women. Women's labour and contribution at the community level through the water and sanitation projects and in other community work was strongly recognised and valued by men. Men saw women as

trustworthy in contributing to community events and labour and both women and men noted that women were the first to respond to calls for community meetings and work and had prioritised water and sanitation in the initial discussions with WV that led to the projects. Based on this recognition and the value placed on women's contributions, men had increased their respect for women which in turn led to valuing their voice in decision-making, discussed further under a separate outcome below.



Men's recognition of women's hard work

Changes in men's attitude to women in both communities appeared to begin with men noticing how much time, effort and labour the women contributed to making the WASH projects happen and be successful. This was evident in both communities:

During fundraising we [the women] were contributing a lot because we wanted all of the things in the community action plan to happen. Especially cooking for sale [for fundraising]. This contribution helped bring all the materials (roof sheets, sand, slab material) to the community as it paid for the transport. Because of our efforts the plan happened. This was recognised by the men. I was very very proud that all these things happened because of our efforts (Nanen women).

It was their [women's] dream to have a water supply, the women asked World Vision themselves. They did a lot of the hard work. They collected the sand from the beach and the blocks and carried materials with the men to the source (Puluan man).

Women are the ones who actively participate in community works and in the fundraising. They are faithful in coming to workshops and trainings. Women are the ones who take their kids to the clinics and get more information on how they should treat their children's health. Not the men (Puluan man).

"Yu tok wetem action" [women talk with action] – when women want something to happen they talk and they do it themselves. They put into practice what they learn in workshops (Puluan man).

This recognition of women's hard work in the WASH projects also seemed to extend to recognising their role in contributing to other kinds of community work and their responsiveness to the community leaders:

Women are first to attend community meetings and women are more faithful in community work than men (Puluan man).

When the community bell rings for community work the first people who come are the women (Puluan man).

They [women] respect their leaders more than the men do (Puluan man).

Women make big work, work hard, more than men (Puluan man).

When women and men were asked about the extent of change in recognition of women's work and contribution to the community, in Nanen 57% of women and 55% of men voted that there was a *very big change*. In Puluau 71% of women and 78% of men perceived there to have been a *very big change* in this area.



In both communities women believed this recognition to be essential in enabling other gender outcomes such as including women on committees and in decision-making. In Nanen women felt that men's recognition of their work was the first step in changing men's attitude towards them, and ranked this as the most important outcome achieved by the project. In Puluau, women proposed that the reason they felt able to take up roles on the committee was because of men's recognition of their hard work, and also because the women themselves recognised that they had a valuable contribution to make: "women realise they have something important to offer the community" was one of the enabling factors that women noted.

Men's increased sense of trust in women

The recognition of women's hard work and contribution was also connected to an increased sense of trust of women:

Most men appreciate the duties the women have been carrying out daily, which creates more trust by men of women (Nanen woman).

Everything in the community – we trust women with the duties (Puluau man).

"Thru long ol mama community I laef long olgeta" [Community is alive because of women – women give life]. They are participating and are contributing very well in all of the trainings, community work, fundraising] (Puluau man).

Why women are in the committees? Because men and the majority of the community now trust women just because of their commitment in community works (Puluau man).

The increased trust in women and recognition of their labour was associated with an increased sense of respect for women:

Now we have recognised the women's labour and we respect them. We have to give respect. We've recognised our mistake (Puluau man).

"It's like a chicken, if it has only one wing it will go in circles. We need to work together and not have women left behind (Nanen woman).

Women's inclusion in decision making processes in their community

This outcome of the project relates to changes in women's involvement in positions of responsibility and in decision-making more broadly. The project, with its participatory planning processes (explicitly involving women and men) and advocacy for gender balance in water and sanitation committees, had created some important 'firsts' in increasing recognition of women's right to have a voice in decisions. Women reported that they had taken on leadership roles for the first time within their community, noting that this was positive in terms of their self-confidence and empowerment and further led to increased

respect for women more generally. Men were more supportive of making space for women's voice in community decision-making and recognised that women's lack of self-confidence at times restricted their participation and willingness to speak. Their support for the inclusion of women was considered to have stemmed from the previous outcome in terms of men's recognition of women's contribution to the community and increased trust in women.

Women taking on leadership roles for the first time in their community

In both communities, particular women shared their positive experience of being elected to one of the committees, taking up leadership roles for the first time with support from men, male leaders and their husbands and an increase in their individual sense of empowerment. For the individuals it increased their sense of self-confidence, self-worth, agency and willingness to take on leadership roles in other areas of their life:

I was elected to committee and am very proud, it is unusual to have a woman on a committee and contribute to decisions e.g. about payment for water etc. I feel more respected by my husband, like my status has improved and I am taking more of a leadership role also in the religious group of which I am a part. In my family the relationship is improved and I am happier (Puluan, female water committee member).

I was the treasurer last year for the community [water] committee. I was very proud. The men had chosen me and voted for me. I was very proud as I was the first and only woman to be on the committee. I was faithful in attending the workshops, the community trusted me and gave me this position of high trust. It made me feel proud to be a woman. I was the first lady to have a position of responsibility. As the treasurer I was responsible for organising the fundraising as part of the action plan (Nanen, female water committee member).

Women's inclusion in committees and decision making processes

Beyond an individual sense of growing empowerment, the inclusion of women on committees and in community level decision-making about water and sanitation matters was positive for women and the wider community and led to a sense of collective empowerment for the women:

We used to be scattered and not working together (between the women), now we have representation in the committee. Now women start to talk in meetings, now there are women who help take decisions. Before women didn't talk in community meetings, now they participate and also take decisions. It makes me so proud that we have a voice in development compared to previous years where only men talk. This is through the encouragement from World Vision (Puluan woman).

The committee was very important in the project. Women and men always talked together about matters concerning water (Puluan man).

In the past all discussions and decisions were made by the men in the nakamals. Women were just kept behind. In this project we came together, almost, and worked together but with different roles (Nanen woman).

In both communities it was evident through the voting process that both women and men considered it important that women be on the relevant committee (see Figure 2 below). In Nanen, 92% of men considered it important or very important for women to be on the committee with only one respondent not considering it important, whilst 89% of women thought it important or very important. In Puluan all respondents considered it important that women be on the water and sanitation committee.

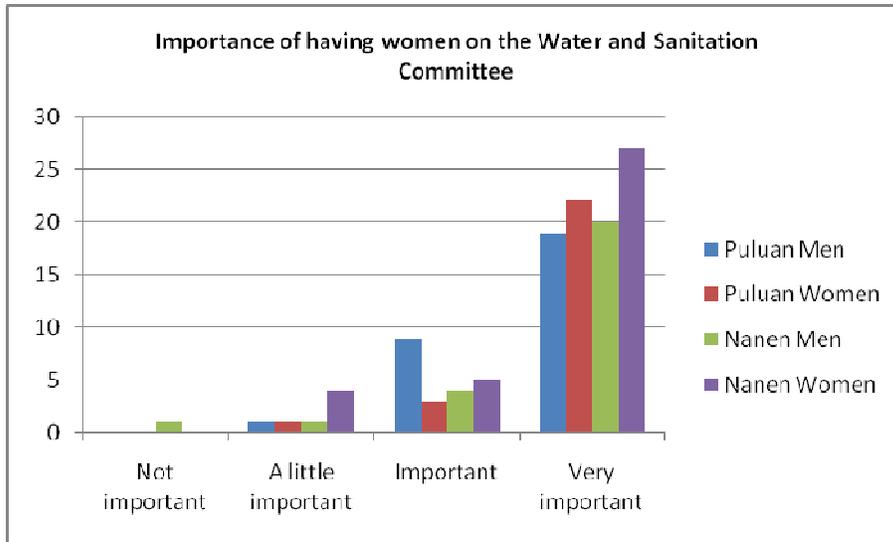


Figure 2 Importance of having women on the Water and Sanitation Committee

The committees were structured differently in each community, and the longevity of women's representation on the committee varied. In both communities the women were elected to the positions of treasurers, while the chairpersons remained men. In Puluang, the nature and representation of women and men on the water and sanitation committees remained unchanged from what had been set up through World Vision's project processes a year prior. The water committee in particular was considered to be working well and the two women and five men were actively dealing with leakages, repairs and ensuring payments to maintain the water supply were made. In Nanen the two committees (water and sanitation) had been amalgamated into a development committee which no longer included any women. When this issue was discussed, it appeared that women who had been on the committee had at times not been attending meetings and instead sending their husbands, which may have related to lack of confidence or to lack of space given by men for women to actively participate and speak:

In the elections women have been elected to the committee. But later when they hold a meeting the women elected didn't go so they sent their husbands to attend... so they have no say (Nanen man).

Men need to give space, men don't always give the space (Nanen woman).

Beyond participation in committees, women's participation in broader community decision-making was also discussed. As part of the PHAST planning process both women and men were involved in collective decision-making about the choice of water, sanitation and hygiene technology and facilities, ranking them against their own criteria. In Nanen, the women had proposed and argued for rainwater collection whilst the men prioritised a direct gravity fed water system. The women's



reasons were that they had seen a gravity fed system fail due to land-ownership issues and knew that such issues would arise with that technology for their community too. Ultimately it was the women's choice that was decided upon and the women felt that their voices had been heard:

During the PHAST process the concerns of the mothers were raised and heard and the change came about in that they now have rainwater tanks. The example was the decision to use rainwater harvesting and not gravity feed. This was the women's voice, there had been a big argument with the men at the time (Nanen woman).

One change is that after PHAST workshops the voices of the women have been heard, now we have water tanks (Nanen woman).

The women's visions in both communities focused on their desire for increased participation in decision-making in the future through committees and through other roles. In Nanen the women role-played forming a committee. The men resisted having women as part of the committee and said they didn't want to have the women on the committee however the chief intervened and supported equal representation of women and men on the committee accompanied with a reminder that men must respect women and women must respect men. In Puluau one of the women's visions included a woman becoming a focal point in the community whereby outsiders would contact that woman if they needed to discuss something with the community. The vision showed the woman also giving instructions for what community work was to be undertaken and resolving a fight between a husband and wife. These all represent major changes in roles envisioned by the women.



Increased space and support for women's voice to be heard at community level

For women to participate in decision-making as described above, changes in men's attitude towards supporting women's involvement and genuinely wanting to hear their views is paramount. The following quotes describe how women view this matter and some of the changes they observed:

Our dream is that men respect us and they start to do the same work we do and that we be given permission to speak in meetings (Nanen woman).

Previously during the meetings the men would tell us we are women so we can't talk and we remain silent, but now we are talking since World Vision's project (Nanen woman).

We have community work on Tuesdays, to look after the animals, cleaning community etc. Before not many participated but now many participate, both women and men. Every Tuesday they have a meeting as part of this. Now the women are speaking – and being listened to – about things like water supply and maintenance and general responsibilities. Based on this discussion, the community work gets planned and women and men cooperate to undertake the agreed work (Puluau woman).

While the space for women's voice was valued in itself, men felt that the women needed encouragement to build their self-confidence to utilise the opportunity to speak when it was provided to them. Men's support was a positive outcome in and of itself, as it demonstrates

that they valued women’s contributions and were aware that lack of self-confidence was one factor holding the women back:

Women can speak but they still don’t have confidence in themselves. In a meeting, women have very good ideas, but they don’t really have the confidence to give them out (Puluan man).

When we are in a meeting as a committee member you are given the right to talk. Nothing can stop you women from speaking. Women can speak but they still don’t have the confidence to (Puluan man).

Make sure you use the chance, give everything from you heart, not hold back (Puluan man).

In meetings women have many important ideas in their minds and hearts. They just don’t have the confidence to talk in front of everyone. You can see them shaking, their mouths are shaking. They have lots of good things in their heart they just need to speak it out (Puluan man).

Heart blong you en strait. Gudfela in your heart emi stap there, need confidence and courage to speak it out [You have a good/true heart. The goodness in your heart stays there inside, you need confidence and courage to speak it out] (Puluan man).

In both communities the voting process included a question about the extent to which women are speaking more in community meetings about water, sanitation and hygiene than before the World Vision project. Of 120 women and men across the two communities, only two males responded that there was no change. Of the remaining participants 78% of men and 91% of women considered it a big or very big positive change. What is interesting about the quantitative result is that women perceived more of a change than men in each of the participating communities (see Figure 3 below). This may be due to women valuing the new opportunity they have had to speak very highly and perceiving the change to be big. Men may perceive the change as less significant as in both places the men observed that the women were shy and lacked confidence to speak even when given the opportunity.

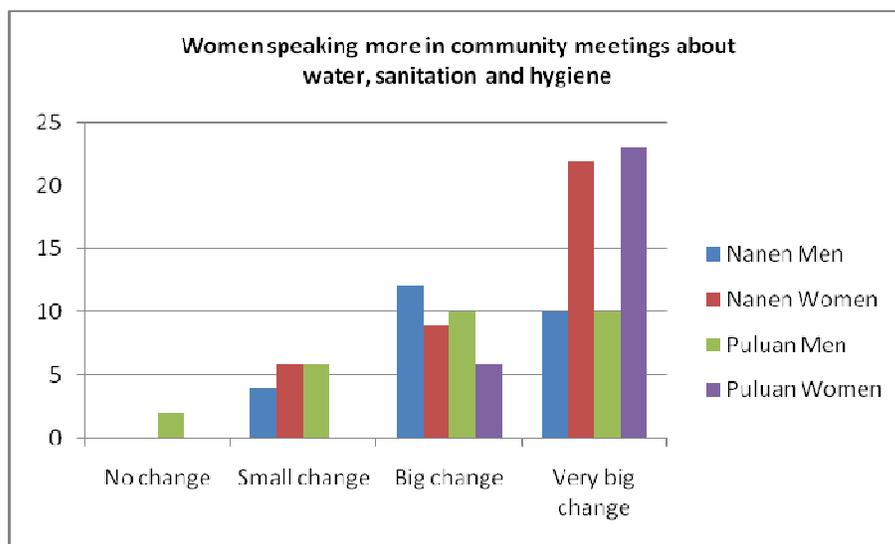


Figure 3 Change in women speaking in community meetings about water, sanitation and hygiene since the World Vision project

Finally, the women's and men's visions in both communities included elements supporting women's on-going involvement in decision-making. One of the men's visions included the following:

We must involve more women in water and sanitation committees and men have to allow women to make decisions in the committees (Puluan men).

Women's labour in collecting water is reduced and their practical need for water, hygiene and sanitation facilities is satisfied

This outcome is the one most commonly mentioned in any report on gender impacts of water, sanitation and hygiene programs (however as is evident from the above, it can actually be just one of many outcomes). It includes both the reduction in physical labour associated with collecting and carrying water to homes and satisfying women's practical gender need for water, sanitation and hygiene in their daily lives as care-givers in their families.



In both communities women and girls are the main collectors of water, and also the main end-users of water. In their care-giving roles in families it was clear that women, more than men, appreciated the hygiene education and resulting changes and having easy access to water and sanitation facilities. These practical needs were satisfied through the WASH projects as discussed below, in terms of the reduction in women's labour and in satisfying their need for WASH in daily life. These outcomes were at the forefront of women's minds when asked about positive experiences with respect to the project, and were ranked as highly important by both women and men.

Reduction in women's labour in water collection

In Puluan, prior to the project, accessing water involved several hours walk. Women's labour in fetching water had therefore been drastically reduced as a result of the World Vision project. In Nanen, obtaining water was not quite so difficult and there had been a previous water project, however women still highly valued the ease of accessing water near their houses. The quotes below illustrate the impact that ready access to water has had on women's lives and labour:



In the past they [women] were catching water with bamboo and plastic bottles.... nowadays there is a reduction of burdens (Puluan man).

Men and women are very happy for the water. Life is easy now that we no longer go far distances. Now we can wash our clothes at home (Puluan woman).

Children every morning used to have to walk long distances before going to the shower. Now it's at home (Puluan woman).

Since water came, I have been waking up as early as possible to prepare breakfast for my kids to eat and go to school. It has helped a lot in reducing the labour and distance for me to walk and fetch water. I used to walk a long distance to draw water from creeks and from the ocean. And I am so glad because women are the ones who do a lot of water collection in our community (Puluan woman).

I am happy I am not walking a long distance to collect water. It has reduced my labour. But sometimes, when there is a problem in the water system, e.g. leakage of pipes, when they are cleaning the tank they have to close all the pipes, it makes me feel very sad that I am starting to do that same work again and am back to where I started (Puluan woman).

Before there was so much difficulty to fetch water so I used to shut my baby in the sleeping house so I could take the clothes down to wash and carry back the water. It used to be so hard and heavy work. When I came back the baby would be crying. Now there is less walking and work to get water. I have more time at home to care properly for my children. I'm now teaching good hygiene practices and I am a good mother. Before I used to go to the hospital with my children all the time. But now they are healthy (Nanen woman, crying as she told this story).

As a woman I'm very happy to have a tank in my village. It has helped reduce my workload as now I don't have to walk far to fetch water. Now at home I have access to safe water. Now I have time to cook for the men who are constructing the toilet slabs so I could support them. I'm very happy (Nanen woman).

Practical need for water, sanitation and hygiene to care for families

Many women, and a few men, spoke about how access to water, hygiene education and sanitation facilities had satisfied a strong need and improved their lives. For women, it meant a reduction in sickness amongst families and children and therefore a reduced caring burden:

Water helps a lot and reduces the sickness as the plates are clean. Now we have clean water it reduces sickness. We have clean homes, kids and all use clean water for washing and cooking. It helps us stay healthy (Puluan woman).

Now that we have water the dispensary is no longer full. We used to have too much sickness, especially the children. Now all our yards are clean, we have good health and hygiene (Puluan woman).

Other women mentioned how important easy access to water was for other tasks such as cooking:

Water is important to our lives because we use it to wash, cook and drink and I am happy that we have easier access to water now than previous years (Puluan woman).

Now I can cook things in water and not just in the fire (Puluan woman).

Finally, women mentioned the ease of keeping themselves and their families clean and having access to quality toilets:

Now I can shower after coming in from garden. Before we had to drink from bamboo. We have seen many health changes and improvements (Puluan woman).

I was really struggling to get water from the creek at the coast and our toilets were very poor standard but now we have water here and improved toilets and they are much closer to our house (Puluan woman).

There is no more need for parents to walk a long way to wash children or to use water for other sanitation practices (Puluan woman).

Enabling factors identified by the communities

Enabling factors identified by the communities relating to community strengths

A broad range of innate strengths in the community and community members were perceived to have contributed to achieving the gender outcomes discussed above. Potentially the most important factor in both communities was having strong, respected male leadership supporting women's needs being met and their voices being heard.



In both communities the chief and other community leaders gave priority to the issue of water and sanitation, which



predominantly affects the lives of women. They were also providing leadership in fostering appropriate attitudes towards women by men, including respect, assisting in the home and valuing women's participation in committees and decision-making. The male community Chairman in

Nanen was a role model who shared roles in his household and participated strongly in community water and sanitation activities, providing positive male leadership.

Another enabling factor proposed by the men was spirituality and guidance given in the church and through reading the bible which mutual reinforced and legitimised the projects intentions. This influence appeared to have contributed to changing men's attitude towards their wives in terms of increasing respect. The realisation of their prayers for water supplies had strengthened their faith. They felt that God, faith and love in their families was important to pursue.

For women, an important aspect that enabled the gender outcomes observed was a realisation of their own contribution and worth. One group of women mentioned that they realised through the World Vision project that they had an important contribution to make at the community level and this increased their ability to participate in committees and decision-making. Another group mentioned that both women and men had realised the need for change, and that decisions made only by men may not be as good as those that are contributed to by women. As mentioned earlier in this report, men also shifted in their recognition of women's work and the value of their contribution. In both communities men noted that the women worked extremely hard to make the water and sanitation project successful and in doing so gained the respect and trust of men.

Enabling factors relating to World Vision Vanuatu's approach

Enabling factors associated with World Vision's approach were identified by staff and community members including the benefits of PHAST as a process, World Vision's development practice generally and qualities of individual staff members involved in the projects.

PHAST is a participatory planning approach for promoting hygiene, sanitation and community management of water and sanitation facilities. The underlying basis for this approach is that no lasting change to people's behaviours will occur without understanding and believing that communities, both women and men, should determine their own priorities for disease prevention if it is to be successful. The participatory planning approach relies strongly on the use of pictures which makes it enjoyable, accessible and suitable for low literacy groups. It is highly participatory and draws from adult learning principles. As part of the process women and men assess and determine the most appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene improvements against their own criteria with consideration to the views of both women and men (evidenced by the selection of rainwater harvesting as the most appropriate water supply method by women in Nanen). World Vision includes a 24-hour clock activity to raise awareness of the gendered division of labour during the planning steps and to ensure consideration is given to existing and future gendered division of labour when work roles are identified in work plans. The use of pictures, the planning and decision making process, the 24-hour activity clock and group participation was seen by community members and NGO staff as being enabling factors. PHAST as a community engagement process was considered successful in creating space for women and influencing attitudes in a patriarchal cultural context such as Tanna.

Beyond PHAST, there were various factors related to World Vision practice that were seen as supporting positive gender outcomes. These included consideration of the needs of women in determining timing and locations of project activities. For example, the project facilitated a planning process at the community level rather than in the provincial town, which increased the likelihood of women's participation. Training of community hygiene promoters in Nanen in particular targeted both women and men and encouraged men to play more active roles in hygiene in their homes. In both communities women were elected to the committees following strong encouragement by World Vision staff, in preparation for and during the elections. World Vision's programmatic approach provided for the committees and plans to be supported by follow up training on roles and responsibilities for committee members and leadership training, and continuing support will be provided through a Governance Project. Notably, the training was open to the broader community rather than limited to committee members and included a focus on the importance of sharing gender roles in the home.

There was preparation and follow-up with the male community leadership in terms of promoting the value of women attending community and committee meetings, their participation in the project as well as on-going follow-up. This was negotiated from the outset with reference to the organizational values of World Vision as



being “child focused AND women focused”. After each community meeting male staff members would spend time in the nakamal to gauge responses from the male leadership and discuss any concerns. When World Vision provided gender and development training to staff, they in turn invited male leaders from communities to participate.

Finally, the quality, commitment and attitude of staff members involved in the projects enabled positive gender outcomes. The staff included locally recruited women and men, all of whom were well versed in the culture, language and dynamics of the communities and had established good relationships with each community. The male and female staff members worked well together to engage women and men in what was a strongly patriarchal society. The male staff were acknowledged by the communities to be strong advocates for women and to be generally respectful and positive.

Discussion of gender outcomes

Practical needs and strategic interests

Practical gender needs are the concrete and practical needs women and men have for survival and economic advancement, which do not challenge the existing sexual division of labour, legal inequalities, or other aspects of discrimination due to cultural and social practices (AusAID, 2007). WASH programs commonly focus and report on meeting women’s practical gender needs such as access to safe water, critical to carrying out their daily responsibilities. This should not be read as downplaying the significance of meeting women’s practical gender needs; as the following quote indicates, satisfying practical gender needs can have a huge impact on women’s health and their discretionary time, which is often a prerequisite for strategic gender gains:

... women and girls in low-income countries spend 40 billion hours every year fetching and carrying water from sources which are often far away and may not, after all, provide clean water. From this standpoint, it is simple to understand that a woman could be empowered by having a nearby pump that conveniently supplies enough safe water for her family (Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, 2006).

However, involving women in decision making processes and committees can mean strategic interests may also be addressed through primarily practical projects. Practical needs and strategic interests are complementary, and programs that only target practical needs may not be sustainable unless strategic interests are also taken into account (AusAID, 2007). Strategic gender interests refer to the status of women in relation to men. Progress towards meeting strategic gender needs supports women to achieve greater equality and enables change in existing roles, thereby challenging women’s subordinate position (Moser, 1993). Addressing structural and cultural barriers to women’s equal participation in all aspects of life – that is, changes that address underlying causes as well as the consequences of inequality – help to bring about fundamental changes in gender relations.

Table 1 below indicates that at the community level some progress towards addressing strategic needs was made and valued, particularly in relation to women’s participation in public decision making, increased space and support for women’s voices, improved gender relations and increased respect for women by men. There was a strong link between each of the outcomes that enabled this, for example without the recognition of women’s labour,

changing attitudes and increasing respect, the space to speak in community meetings would not have been made and accepted.

Table 1 Practical gender needs and strategic gender interests

Outcome	Practical	Potential to be Strategic	Strategic
Positive changes in gender relations at the family or household level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased respect given to women by husbands and other men in the household Changes in gender division of labour with men taking on an increasing role in hygiene in their home to support their wives 	x		x
Reduction in violence at the household level	x		
Positive changes in gender relations at the community level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men's recognition of women's hard work Men's increased trust in women 	x	x	
Women's inclusion in decision making processes in their community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women taking on leadership roles for the first time in their community resulting in individual empowerment Women's inclusion in committees and decision making processes Increased space and support for women's voice to be heard at community level 			x
Women's labour in collecting water reduced and their practical gender need for water, hygiene and sanitation facilities is satisfied	x		

Increased access to decision making

The World Vision projects provided tangible paths for women's increased access to decision making within the context of WASH at the community level. In terms of women's meaningful involvement in decision making, outcomes primarily related to the increased individual empowerment of women who took on leadership roles for the first time in their community. This happened through their representation on committees, their inclusion in community meetings and decision-making processes and the increased space and support provided for women's voice to be heard at the community level.

Outcomes did not extend to an increase in the extent to which women influence decision-making beyond the one example where women chose which water supply technology would be installed in the community. Men still retain the power to determine the space accorded to women through traditional leadership structures and information about the project was still communicated first through the male leadership. There was, however, strong

encouragement from the male leadership for women's voices to be heard and to be represented on committees. These key first steps could be extended by working more closely with women in areas of confidence building, including familiarisation with formal meeting procedures, leadership skills development, closer monitoring of and support to women on the committees, rotating various committee roles such as chair or treasurer as well as exploring further some of the barriers to women's participation from the perspective of the women.

Recognition of women's labour and changing gender roles

Value was placed on the increased recognition of women's labour and their contributions to the community. An activity had been employed as part of the project planning process that utilised a 24-hour clock to discuss women's and men's activities and roles each day. This activity resulted in greater emphasis being placed on shared responsibilities, and women's time had been positively impacted by improvements in access to water (though not necessarily freed). While clear segregation of tasks remains, there was evidence that gender roles are more fluid, with men engaging more in household hygiene activities. This was supported by the valued changes in household gender relations in terms of increased communication, respect and trust between men and women, which were highly valued by both men and women.

Changes in roles and use of time provides an indication of women's negotiating power at the household level, which is an important element of women's empowerment and gender equality (Ivens, 2008) and a domain where change can be difficult to achieve (Hunt et al., 2009). Within the family and the broader community, the apparent acceptability of the use of violence by men against women to resolve household disputes over labour in one of the communities indicates significant power imbalances and very challenging gender relations. The research could not confirm the degree to which the reported increase in respect towards women would in future prevent men resorting to violence to resolve water or other disputes.

Achieving even better outcomes

The World Vision team envisioned how even better outcomes could be achieved through their WASH projects. Suggestions included working more closely with the women to ensure they receive information about the project and committees more directly. In addition, staff members identified provision of training in leadership and in the functions and roles of committees, providing more support to the women on the committees and monitoring the functioning of the committees as tools for maximizing positive gender outcomes. Literacy was identified as a barrier to women's participation, so ensuring the WV Literacy project is integrated within the overall programmatic approach would increase the number of women who are literate and can participate on committees. There was also further work to do in terms of raising gender awareness with men and the broader community and investing more time with the male leadership, particularly the chiefs, to build their commitment and capacity to support women's participation in decision making (in WASH and other areas).

In terms of staffing, considering employing men as hygiene promoters and ensuring the female staff are supported rather than outnumbered was suggested. It was considered important to monitor and evaluate changes in gender outcomes before, during and after a project.

Conclusion

This case study, along with the Fiji Case Study, illustrates the multiple links between gender and WASH, and the fact that WASH programs can offer powerful opportunities for advancing gender equality in both practical and strategic terms. In particular, strong achievements were made in case study communities in Vanuatu with regard to strategic gender outcomes relating to women's relative power and status in their homes and in the community. A reduction in physical violence associated with disputes over water management is a critical gender outcome that the authors have not seen reported before with respect to WASH activities. In general, many of the changes (such as women's inclusion in decision-making) were only the first steps towards empowering women and shifting men's attitude to enable more equal relationships. However there were promising signs that continued changes would take place in the future, building on achievements so far, and that the dialogue that took place as part of the research had opened new possibilities.

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