EHD follow-up support for water committees and communities in Solomon Islands

Results of an action research activity in Isabel & Western Province

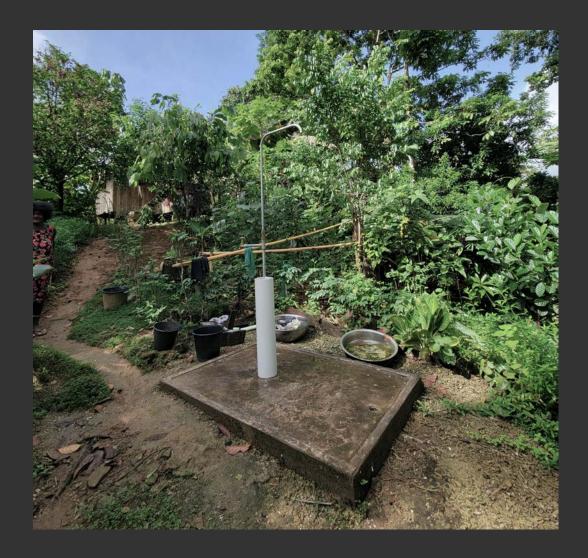












Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION
Rural water service delivery in Solomon Islands
Western and Isabel Provinces6
EHD Water Committee "backstopping": Structured monitoring and follow-up
METHODOLOGY
Limitations8
CASE-STUDY VILLAGE BACKGROUND
Isabel Province
Western Province9
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 11
Planned and Actual Actions
Field Report Summary
Baeni (Western Province)12
Kaza (Western Province)12
Lambulambu (Western Province)13
Nusa Roviana (Western Province)13
Banisokeo (Isabel Province)13
Talise (Isabel Province)
Thagathaga (Isabel Province)14
Banisokeo (Isabel Province)15
Summary Findings
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
REFERENCES
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS 24
APPENDIX 3: PHOTOS FROM VILLAGE TRANSECTS

Acknowledgements

We thank the participants and Church administrators – particularly Dr Abraham Hauriasi (ACOM), Holan Lianga (UC) and Patson and Adrienee Fomani (SSEC) – the team at GHD (especially Matt Bond and Alisson Baker) and the Solomon Islands PEHD and RWASH team, namely Merilyn Vana (PEHD Western Province) and Ethel Vaeveka (PEHD Isabel), for making this action research activity possible. We also thank Hugo Bogoro, Marklyn Vovo and Alex Makini from the Office of Research and Post Graduate Studies, Solomon Islands National University, for their administrative assistance.

This research was funded by the Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Water for Women Fund program, as part of the PaCWaM+ 2 research project (WRA-CR02).

Project information

Locations: Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji

Lead organisation: International WaterCentre, Griffith University

Key Research Partners: Solomon Islands National University, The University of the South Pacific (Laucala campus, Suva, Fiji) and The University of the South Pacific (Emalus Campus, Port Vila, Vanuatu).

Government partners: Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Solomon Islands), Environmental Health Division/RWASH (Solomon Islands), Department of Water Resources (Vanuatu), Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Fiji), and the Department of Water and Sewerage (Fiji).

WfW Project No.: IWC GHD Aust CR02.

Short title: PacWaM+ 2: Supporting decentralised rural water supply in Pacific Islands.

Full project title: PaCWaM+ 2: Supporting decentralised rural water supply in Pacific Islands - formal and informal networks to support rural Water Committee engagement with water resources management for climate resilient WASH outcomes.

Photo credits: Collin Benjamin and Sheilla Funubo.

Suggest citation: Funubo, S., Benjamin, C., Bugoro, H., Panda, N., Souter, R.T., and M. Love. 2023. *EHD follow-up support for water committees and communities in Solomon Islands: Results of an action research activity in Isabel & Western Province.* International WaterCentre, Griffith University: Nathan, Australia; Solomon Islands. National University: Honiara, Solomon Islands. December 2024.

Introduction

Solomon Islands sits within the lowest 20 countries globally for rural access to basic drinking water; access has decreased over the last 20 years - 76.47% in 2000 to 59.41% in 2022 (WHO/UNICEF, 2022). Limited water access and poor water quality impacts sanitation and hygiene practices, contributing to communicable and non-communicable diseases, increasing infection spread and worsening food insecurity and malnutrition (WHO, 2022; Jupiter et al. 2024; MHMS, 2015). Challenging logistics and environmental conditions, combined with limited state presence in rural areas, underscores the challenges of providing safe, sufficient, equitable and reliable water services to rural populations in small island developing states such as Solomon Islands.

Since the 2000s, there has been a growing recognition that the Community Water Management (CWM) model, where a group of volunteers operate as public service delivery mangers, is not working as envisioned and access to safe and secure water in low-resource countries is not progressing. This has led to growing criticism, debate, and a call for alternative service models and approaches, pointed to in terms such as Community Water Management Plus (CWM+) (Baumann, 2006; Hutchings et al., 2015, 2017) or "Service Delivery Approach" (e.g. Lockwood and Smits, 2011; Moriarty et al., 2013; World Bank, 2017). These all cohere around the fundamental point that some kind of post-construction support is required to communities when they are, by policy or circumstance, required to manage, operate and maintain their own water supply system.

The rise of CWM+ approaches is often accompanied by increasing governmental decentralisation trends, greater professionalisation in the rural water sector, and a diversification in service delivery models, including various forms of private sector involvement. These approaches seek to consider the entire life-cycle cost of water service delivery, incorporating both the hardware (engineering or construction elements) and software (management) components into budget allocations and policy settings (e.g. Lockwood and Smits, 2011).

In the early 2010s, Solomon Islands began moves to reform the rural water sector: In 2014, the RWASH Unit was established within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS, 2014) and released the *Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Policy* followed by the *Strategic Plan: Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2015-2020* (MHMS, 2015). An updated *RWASH Strategic Plan* (2021-25) (MHMS, 2021) was developed but has not yet been formally endorsed by the government.

The RWASH Policy and Plan were ambitious. A key aim was to devolve greater responsibility for health programming, including EHD/RWASH, to the provincial level, with RWASH steadily moving away from implementation towards a regulatory and monitoring role whilst more "service delivery partners" (SDPs) – e.g. private sector and non-government organisations (NGOs) – take over implementation (SIG, 2015; MHMS, 2017). This has not materialised and stands as a marked example of "policy implementation deficit".

The recent cessation of EU funding, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic and human resource gaps (vacant positions) has resulted in departmental under-performance and over-stretched staff at national and subnational levels. Since 2020, RWASH has worked on only 39 projects. In 2024, RWASH constructed no water systems at all: a situation that on senior RWASH manager cited as "appalling" and an example of "over-promising and under-delivering" (in Love et al., 2024).

To address poor operation and maintenance practices at the community water system management level, in 2019 the RWASH Program introduced *Community Engagement Guidelines* (CE), which detail how to engage and prepare recipient communities for their WASH scheme and build community water management capacity (RWASH, 2019a, 2019b). The CE process includes training for water committees (WCs) in plumbing skills to they can undertake basic maintenance activities (repairing small leaks, replacing washes) and some "software" focused training (roles and responsibilities, bylaws/rules, planning and financial contributions for operation and maintenance costs, e.g. water fees). However, an analysis of the RIS database shows that RWASH have struggled, with 79 of a total 135 completed projects not yet receiving any CE training (RIS, 2023). Moreover, despite the introduction of the CE training, most WCs remain inactive, or reactive at best, with very few examples of successful community water management and good WASH outcomes in evidence (see Love et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b).

The Solomon Islands, government have estimated that over 50% of water systems are not functioning, and many systems require rehabilitation before reaching even half their designed lifespan (MERE, 2017). WCs struggle to operate and maintain their water supply system due to a range of complex factors, including inactiveness,

insufficient finances (a lack of water fee/fundraising for spare parts), and (sometimes) limited technical capacity. Determinate social/governance or "software" factors include:

• The high turnover rate amongst WC members due to competing commitments/priorities, as well as the relatively low "status" associated with being on a water or WASH committee

• Insufficient financing to support system sustainability (e.g. a lack of water fee/fundraising), resulting in WCs being unable to fund the materials and labour required for inspection and repair

• Inadequate data sharing and project coordination between national and provincial governments (including local MPs and their Rural Constituency Development Funds) and civil society actors (NGOs, private sector and faith-based organisations), resulting in WASH coverage inefficiencies

• The low involvement of women and youth in water management activities fuels poor decision making, resulting in inequitable resource allocation and poor community buy-in (for important collective actions such as water fees)

• Water committees are often unable to motivate and encourage community participation in water management activities (esp. water fee/fundraising) due to a) lack of community cohesion due to intractable socio-political grievances; b) limited/difficult water source options

• The total absence of government or private sector post-construction follow-up support and monitoring to communities and WCs (e.g. Love et al. 2020, 2021a; MHMS, 2014; JMP 2023; Water Aid, 2016, WHO, 2012).

Collectively, these factors are resulting in infrastructure deterioration, low WASH service and access levels (including water loss and contamination), and poor public and environmental health outcomes for Solomon Islanders.

Some of these factors are structural and cannot be changed, bother can be feasibility tackled.

The professionalisation of rural water service delivery at scale is unlikely in the near term in Solomon Islands – the CWM model will remain the dominant service delivery model. The most contextually appropriate, feasible and strategic solution is some kind of **follow-up support** to WCs. But what might this look like in Solomon Islands?

Building on earlier formative and action research in Phase I of the Pacific Community Water Management Plus (PaCWaM+) project (<u>https://watercentre.org/projects/pacific-community-water-management-plus-pacwam/</u>), Phase II (2022-24) extended on the knowledge, lessons, and relationships built during Phase I and undertook action research on two different kinds of structured follow-up support to water committees: a **formal** (state) and **informal** (non-state) approach.

Formal: Structured follow-up visits by provincial Environmental Health Division/RWASH team (Western and Isabel Province) to water committees

Informal: Partnering with various Faith-based Organisations, co-developed Action Plans with church leaders (Pastors, Deacons, Catechist, Church group leaders) who then went back to their communities to engage with water committees and communities on improving water management

This PaCWaM+ report focuses on the results of formal **structured follow-up** by subnational government actors (Environmental Health Division/RWASH team).

Rural water service delivery in Solomon Islands

The government of Solomon Islands manages rural water service delivery through a decentralised structure involving national ministries, provincial governments, and local governance mechanisms. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) is the lead agency responsible for rural WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), with oversight provided by its **Environmental Health Division** (EHD) and **Rural Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene** (RWASH) Unit (SIG, 2015). The Ministry of Mines, Energy, and Rural Electrification oversees water resource management and regulation, while the *National Water Resources and Sanitation Policy* (WATSAN Policy) (NIWCC, 2017a) and *National Water and Sanitation Implementation Plan* (WATSAN Plan) (NIWCC, 2017b) provide a broad framework for governance (SIG, 2015).

At the subnational level, Provincial Governments are responsible for implementing WASH programs, but financial constraints and limited technical capacity often impede progress (Allen et al., 2013; Phillips, 2017). The Provincial Environmental Health Division (PEHD) manages RWASH activities, though Western Province is structured slightly different than the other provinces (SIG, 2015). The Provincial Capacity Development Fund (PCDF), introduced as part of the Provincial Governance Strengthening Program (PGSP), aims to enhance provincial governance and financial management, indirectly improving WASH service delivery (World Bank, 2022).

Multiple external actors also contribute to rural water service delivery. NGOs such as World Vision, Plan International, and Save the Children have supported WASH infrastructure projects (RWASH, 2021a). Additionally, Members of Parliament allocate funds for small-scale infrastructure through the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF), though accountability issues have been raised regarding its effectiveness (Phillips, 2017). Private sector engagement in rural water services remains minimal, with only a few contractors involved (SIG, 2015). CWM remains the dominant model, but many water committees (WCs) lack training and financial sustainability mechanisms (Love et al., 2020; WaterAid, 2016). The RWASH policy promotes user fees, but low social acceptance has hindered cost recovery, with recent suggestions to shift from "water fees" to "maintenance fees" to improve compliance (in Love et al., 2024).

As noted above, despite existing policies, monitoring and post-construction support remain weak. The *RWASH Strategic Plan* (2015-2020) envisioned a shift in the government's role from direct service provision to a regulatory and monitoring function, with greater reliance on service delivery partners (SDPs) such as NGOs and private actors (MHMS, 2015; NIWCC, 2017a). However, **this transition has been poorly resourced and slow to materialise**, largely due to funding shortfalls, institutional capacity gaps, and weak enforcement of decentralisation policies (Love et al., 2024). There is also a substantial lack of sector coordination and harmonisation, and sector working groups have not met or been active for several years (Ibid.).

Local rural water committees, as outlined in the *RWASH Policy* (2014), are responsible for actively participating in and taking ownership of WASH planning and maintenance. They must contribute labour, materials, and resources to projects, resolve disputes over land and water use, and ensure inclusive participation in WASH decision-making. Additionally, they are expected to request necessary infrastructure modifications from the Provincial Environmental Health Division (PHED) and report vandalism to authorities. Their role is central to sustaining community water systems and ensuring equitable access to WASH services. But as noted, this is not happening: **inactive water committees and inadequate maintenance of water systems are resulting in frequent service disruptions, limited access to safe water, and deteriorating WASH outcomes.**

A key decentralisation mechanism introduced in recent years is the **Ward Development Committees** (WDCs). Established under the Provincial Capacity Development Fund (PCDF), WDCs aim to support participatory planning and local development, including WASH service delivery (MPGIS, 2020). These committees were introduced to address the governance vacuum left by the abolition of Area Councils in the late 1990s (Allen et al., 2013; Phillips, 2017). Their mandate includes identifying community needs, prioritising projects, and liaising with provincial governments, making them well-positioned to support decentralised WASH governance (MPGIS, 2020). However, **WASH has not been systematically integrated into their wor**k, and WDCs currently lack the technical capacity and resources needed to coordinate effectively with PEHD/RWASH and other stakeholders and support water committees and communities in better managing their water system (HN-MPGIS-F4).

Strengthening WDCs through targeted capacity-building efforts could enhance their role in WASH planning, implementation, and monitoring (Love et al., 2024). The recent appointment of Ward Development Committee Support Officers (WDCSOs) is a step in this direction, but further training, clearer mandates, and improved funding mechanisms are needed to enable WDCs to actively contribute to WASH governance (SIG, 2024). Investing in their capacity would help bridge the gap between national policies and community-level service delivery, ensuring more effective coordination and long-term sustainability of rural water and sanitation systems (World Bank, 2022).

Western and Isabel Provinces

Governance of water services in Western and Isabel Provinces reflects broader decentralisation challenges in Solomon Islands. The Western Provincial Government has a Provincial Environmental Health Division (PEHD/RWASH) that has implemented 127 water supply systems over 14 years (PEHD Western, 2023). However, the province's large geographic size and dispersed islands create logistical barriers to service delivery (RWASH,

2021a). By contrast, Isabel Province has a more centralised governance structure, allowing for more effective coordination and higher service coverage (MPGIS, 2020).

Water access levels differ significantly between the two provinces. According to RWASH data, 76% of households in Isabel Province have access to basic water services, compared to only 50% in Western Province (RWASH, 2021a). The lower coverage in Western Province is attributed to its larger size (7,509 km²) and scattered communities, making infrastructure delivery more complex (Phillips, 2017). In contrast, Isabel's smaller land area (4,136 km²) and fewer islands facilitate more effective WASH implementation (SIG, 2015).

EHD Water Committee "backstopping": Structured monitoring and follow-up

In 2021, at the conclusion of the PaCWaM+ Phase 1 research project, IWC and SINU conducted a series of Tok Stori events across Western, Isabel, and Malaita provinces, sharing key findings from research undertaken between 2018 and 2022. These sessions included report presentations, publications, and screenings of the Water is Everyone's Business video series. Discussions highlighted the challenges faced by water committees, the shortcomings of the Community Water Management (CWM) model, and the critical need for ongoing monitoring and support after project handover. The results of an earlier "backstopping" action research program in Guadalcanal with PEDH/RWASH (Love et al., 2021a), which suggested that software (governance) issues were more of a factor contributing to water system breakdown than hardware (technical know-how and access to materials) was reflected in many participants perspectives. For many, this gap in follow-up support was identified as a "missing link" in achieving sustainable WASH outcomes. However, many were rightly

As a result of the Tok Stori, an especially motivated senior health inspector from Western Province included structured monitoring and follow-up to four communities in the divisions annual workplan, commencing in 2023. We had already proposed working with provincial EHD /RWASH staff to support structured follow-up or "water committee backstopping" in two provinces as part of our PaCWaM+ Phase 2 program (2022-2024).

The structured monitoring follow-up monitoring and support intervention – *Strongem Wota Komiti* – consisted of:

- a presentation: talking and a video the Water is Everyone's Business Video which as an accompanying suite of questions embedded into the video which the facilitator pauses for discussion)
- A facilitated, participatory SWOT analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) focusing on water management and the water and WASH situation
- The development of an Action Plan
- Telephone follow-up by EHD/RWASH to track progress of Action Plans.

Delivery occurred in a day (4-5 hours) in some contexts (e.g. Nusa Roviana) but was generally undertaken over a day-and-half, with a nighttime showing of the video and discussion, followed by half-day SWOT and Action Plan development session.

This report focuses on the results of the monitoring between 9 - 12 months after the intervention.

Methodology

The study approach consisted of **process monitoring** (at the time of implementation) using fieldnotes, some interviews,¹ and a background case-study review (based on interviews, discussions and observation). This was conducted in June 2023 (Western) and August 2023 (Isabel). A **follow-up [endline-type] monitoring** was undertaken twelve months later in Western (June 2024) and nine months later in Isabel (May 2024). The follow-up monitoring consisted of **interviews** (n=74 – Western 23 F / 21 M; Isabel 12 F / 18 M) and **structured**

¹ Some of these interviews were also for a related formative research project on decentralisation and rural water service delivery (see Love et al., 2024).

observation (village transects and ground-truthing improvements). Interview attributes are provide in Appendix 1.

Interviews were conducted in Solomon Islands Pidgin, recorded (with consent), transcribed and translated into English (for coding in NVivo[®] [see Jackson and Bazeley, 2019; Saldaña 2013] but this has not yet been completed, see limitations below).

Ethics approval was granted by Griffith University (GU Ref No: 2023/161) and the Solomon Islands Health Research and Ethics Review Board, MHMS, on 31 May 2023 (HRE013/23). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews commenced.

Limitations

The analysis in this report is based almost entirely on field reports produced during and/or straight after the final follow-up monitoring (May-June 2024) and some – but not yet all – the interview transcripts. A more thorough presentation of the results will be presented in concert with the FBO 'informal' faith-based Organisation follow-up support approach in a future publication.

The water system in Kaza is 35 years old and no amount of water committee strengthening, or knowledge transfer, can address their needs – which is a new water system. Sites were identified by RWASH, but in future such follow-up monitoring and support activities should focus only on systems 2-10 years old.

Case-study village background

The villages participating in the program varied in size, ranging from 14 to 71 households, and all but two of the water systems were 2-3 years; this was part of PEHDs rationale behind site selection – to assess and support the WC before the systems breakdown due to a lack of maintenance) (Tables 1 and 2). The below description of the sites was collected during implementation of the follow-up activity as part of process monitoring.

Village	Population	HHs	WS est.
Banisokeo	105	27	2022
Thagathaga	78	14	2020
Talise	400	65	2015

Tahle 1 · Isal	bel Province	

Village	Population	HHs	WS est.
Kaza	200	50	1990
Nusa Roviana	800	75	2022
Baeni	160	32	2022
Lambulambu	800	71	2023

Table 2: Western Province

Isabel Province

Banisokeo is a small village in Kokota Ward, Maringe/Kokota Constituency, with a population of 105 people across 27 households. The village, settled approximately 50 years ago, is home to the Posamogo, Thavia, and Nakimiro Funei tribes and follows the Anglican faith. Transport is limited, with the nearest aid post located in Goveo, where common illnesses such as red-eye infections and diarrhoea are reported.

The economy is based on subsistence farming, with residents selling produce at local markets. The average household income is between \$100 and \$200 per month, with only 5% of households receiving remittances from relatives.

Governance is led by a village chief, a chairman, and organisational leaders, with active committees including youth, vestry, mothers' union, and water committee.

Water System and WASH Situation: Banisokeo has one water source, supporting 21 tap stands, with two households sharing each tap. Sanitation coverage is poor, with only six households having flush toilets, while the rest of the community practises open defecation in the mangroves. The water committee is relatively new, established just a year before monitoring, and while there are no leaks, some taps are running consistently.

Talise, located in Jauana Ward, Buguto District, has 367 residents across 65 households, divided into four zones. The village was established in 1954 after World War II and is home to three tribes: Posamogo (largest), Thihokama, and Vigunagi (smallest). Residents are Anglican. The nearest healthcare facility is an aid post staffed by a nurse, with malaria being a common illness.

The economy is primarily driven by logging and mining employment, with market sales supplementing household incomes of \$100 to \$200 per month. Only 5% of households receive remittances.

Governance is led by three chiefs, but there are no written by-laws. The mother's union is the most active committee, frequently organising fundraising events.

Water System and WASH Situation: Talise has one main water source, supplying 40 tap stands. The first water system was built in 1982 by RWASH, with a second system installed in 2015, also by RWASH. Some taps are now leaking, and piped water is available in some homes.

The village has 19 flush toilets, with additional facilities at the school (four flush toilets) and clinic (two toilets). Some households also use Sato-pan toilets. However, community participation in WASH activities is low, indicating a need for stronger engagement and sanitation improvements.

Thagathaga, located in Sigana Ward, is a small village of 78 people across 14 households. The community was established 40 years ago and consists of three tribes: Thokama (largest), Posamogo, and Vihuvangi. The Anglican faith is dominant, and the church, originally built 20 years ago, was rebuilt in 2022. The nearest healthcare facility is Fataba Clinic, where malaria and diarrhoea are common health issues.

The economy is subsistence-based, with villagers selling food crops such as sweet potatoes, yams, and pana at the Tataba market. The average household income is \$200+ per month, with only five households receiving remittances. Logging dispute has been ongoing (commenced two years ago) and a nearby logging operation is contaminating the local river.

Water System and WASH Situation: Thagathaga has one water source, supported by two RW tanks and one storage tank. The first water supply was built in 2014 by JICA, but it is no longer in use. A second water system was built in 2021 by RWASH, featuring 10 tap stands. Almost all taps are leaking, and only one household has piped water.

Sanitation is severely lacking, with open defecation still widely practised. The WASH committee, formed in 2021, is weak and inactive. While other village committees are actively fundraising, the WASH committee has not organised any fundraising efforts.

Western Province

Baeni is a small, close-knit village in Ward 20 (Kolobangea), home to 160 people across 32 households. The village is divided into three zones, with a relatively even distribution of homes. It was first settled in 1986 and is predominantly Seventh Day Adventist (SDA). The village has basic infrastructure, including a church, a community hall, and an aid post at Hovovo Clinic, which is a three-kilometre walk away. The most common health issues include pneumonia and diabetes. Children attend Baeni Primary School and Dekurana Integrated School, which offers secondary and vocational education.

The economy is primarily subsistence-based, with villagers selling root crops and cooked food at local markets. Some households receive remittances from relatives working in Honiara, supplementing their average monthly income of \$500. The community has three small trade stores and three boats, with Noro being the nearest port, requiring a \$200 return trip. Governance is overseen by a paramount chief who resides in Hovovo, and a draft by-law has been submitted to Honiara for approval.

Water System and WASH Situation: Baeni has a single water source, supported by three storage tanks and a reservoir, with 22 tap stands spread across the village. The first water supply system was installed in 2022 by the EU (RWASH National/Provincial). While some houses have access to piped water, supply is inconsistent, and taps are not running all the time. The village water committee, first formed in 2021, is being restructured in 2023.

Sanitation remains a concern, with only 21 out of 32 households having toilets. The remaining 12 households rely on open defecation in a nearby river, which also runs from the water source. The toilets that do exist are - pour flush systems.

Kaza is a remote village in Ward 3, with a population of 265 people across 33 households. It was first settled in 1970 and is entirely comprised of the Lolobo tribe. The village follows the Seventh-Day Adventist faith, shaping its social structure and community activities. Transport is limited, with canoe paddling being the primary mode of travel, and the nearest port is Ringi. Villagers sell fish, garden crops, and cooked food at markets in Ringi and Noro. Household incomes vary, with market sales ranging from \$300 to \$1,000, while some families receive small remittances from working children.

Governance is informal, with two senior men, Billy Sesi and Lebu Mosa, managing community affairs in the absence of a formal village council or by-laws. There are four active committees, including WASH and Disaster Committees, which meet fortnightly or quarterly. Logging, which began in 2021, has caused significant issues, including water shortages and contamination from diesel and oil spills.

Water System and WASH Situation: The village relies on two water systems, both of which are not providing sufficient or adequate water throughout the village. The 2006 tsunami and earthquake is locally said to have altered the water flow, although other suspect that it has more to do with logging. Kaza does not have a functioning water committee. Some tap stands are running dry, and only three households have private sanitation facilities. Most of the community lacks toilets, with open defecation still widely practised.

Lambulambu is a large village in Ward 8 (South Vella), with 800 residents across 71 households. It was first settled in the 1950s, when people migrated from inland areas following World War II. The village is religiously diverse, with congregations from the United Church, SDA, Nazarene, Methodist, and Church of Christ. Infrastructure includes five permanent churches, a school, a community hall, and a women's hall. The village clinic provides basic healthcare. Malaria and flu outbreaks are common.

The economy is based on copra production, with average household incomes of SBD\$200-400 per month. Many families receive remittances from relatives in Honiara. The village has eight trade stores, nine boats (seven fibreglass and two wooden), and logging operations occurring outside the main water source area. Governance is led by a paramount chief in Beiporo, with sub-tribe chiefs overseeing different areas. The village has by-laws that are enforced through community policing, and five active committees, including a water committee.

Water System and WASH Situation

The village's first water supply was installed in 1991 by the Western Provincial Government, using the same water source still relied upon today but upgraded in 2023. The system includes one reservoir tank and 42 tap stands, distributed across the five village zones and the bush areas. Sanitation remains a significant challenge, with only eight households having toilets.

Nusa Roviana, located in Ward 16, has 800 residents across 65 households. It has multiple religious groups, including SDA, United Church, Church of the Living Word, and Wings of Change. Transport is mainly by boat via Noro Port, with the nearest market in Munda. The church and community hall are permanent structures, but both are in poor condition due to a lack of maintenance. The nearest healthcare facility is Munda Hospital, where malaria is a common concern.

The village economy revolves around root crop sales, with an average income of around \$1,200 per month. It has three trade stores, and governance is overseen by a village council and several committees, including a WASH committee. However, frequent community obligations prevent these committees from meeting regularly, leading to inconsistent governance and decision-making.

Water System and WASH Situation: Nusa Roviana's water supply relies on 19 hand pumps, although three were yet to be installed at the time of process monitoring. Rainwater tanks are available at the church and school, but coverage is inadequate. Sanitation infrastructure is limited, with only 20 pour-flush toilets serving the village.

Results and Discussion

Due to not having full access to the qualitative data – only field reports (which include some quotes), photos, and twelve detailed transcripts from Nusa Roviana – the results are presented as follows:

- Planned and Actual Actions: a summary of the Action Plan and if any actions have been undertaken
- Summary of Field Reports for each Province
- Summary analysis of the Nusa Roviana qualitative data

Planned and Actual Actions

Table 3: Actin Plan and Actual activities - Isabel and Western *

Village	WC Formation & Strengthening	Fundraising	Awareness	Maintenance & Cleaning	Training
Banisokeo	\checkmark	√ √		VVV	
Thagathaga	\checkmark \checkmark \checkmark	VVV	\checkmark	√	
Talise	$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark\checkmark$		11	
Kaza	 ✓ ✓ 	\checkmark	$\checkmark\checkmark$		1
Nusa Roviana	~	~	\checkmark		
Baeni	$\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{$	\checkmark	$\checkmark \checkmark$	$\checkmark\checkmark$	
Lambulambu				JJJJ J	

* More than one tick means more than one action item under the relevant category.

As signalled above, water committee strengthening was listed as an action item in all but one village Action Plan and was undertaken in four of the six villages who had nominated it (80%). Fundraising and/or water fee was listed in five of the Action Plans, and undertaken in three (including Baeni, which did not include it in their original Action Plan). Awareness was undertaken actively in three villages. Maintenance and cleaning were undertaken in three of the six villages who had clear actions under this category.

Below is a summary of the results focusing on the four key categories identified in the SWOT and subsequent Action Plans: Water Committee formation and/or strengthening, fundraising and/or water fee, awareness raising, maintenance, repair and cleaning.²

² Training is not assessed here as it was only in one Action Plan and was not yet materialised.

Field Report Summary

Below is a categorised summary of what was deemed demonstratable impacts across the villages in Isabel and Western Provinces, drawing from the field reports. Direct quotes from community members are included where available.³

Baeni (Western Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- Water committee has printed WASH rules for public reference
- Only met once last year, but chairman continues making announcements

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- SBD\$2 household contribution introduced; those unable to pay contribute food instead
- Zone 2 consistently contributes, followed by Zones 3 & 1

Awareness Raising:

• Phone call check-ins from RWASH valued:

"[The calling from RWASH] is very important because they are the right people, bringing us new ideas and guiding us."

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Tap stand caretakers assign cleaning duties to specific households
- After heavy rain, the system is cleaned before water is used again
- Households collect sand from nearby islands to scrub concrete slabs
- Some families pre-store water before expected rain to prepare for disruptions

Kaza (Western Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- New water committee members elected after RWASH workshop
- Community meeting held to communicate the Action Plan

"After the workshop, we elected six new Water Committee members to represent women and youths.....now I feel our WC is inclusive." (KZ4).

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- Contributions announced after church services, but not done regularly
- Treasurer relocated, causing financial collection issues:

"I failed my part. I think, after this visit, the water committee should meet." (KZ9).

Awareness Raising - Video intervention had a strong impact:

"I remember women in the video talking about how they clean their water and the contributions they make." (KZ1)

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- School and community help clean the system when blocked after heavy rain
- Church health committee involved in water cleaning efforts
- School community occasionally fixes pipes but lacks coordination with the water committee

³ Many cannot be attributed respondent IDs as all but the usa Roviana quotes are from the Field Reports.

• Kaza has experienced vandalism of water infrastructure, but when requesting support form police, have met with no response.

Lambulambu (Western Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

• Active chairman, but executive members disengaged

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- SBD\$3 household contribution successfully implemented
- Frequent reliance on maintenance team led to repeated small contributions instead of a long-term fund
- Suggested shift to a \$10 long-term contribution system

Awareness Raising:

- Church leaders make announcements about water cleaning
- Zone representatives disseminate water-related updates

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Soak pits dug by schoolteachers
- Community-wide participation in cleaning access points.
- Soap available at all access points.

"We helped dug a soak pit a few weeks ago for those living inland because it was muddy around their standpipe. This standpipe is used by teachers and students as part of their learning environment, so we helped them." (LM1)

Nusa Roviana (Western Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- Zones 3 & 4 have a structured water committee with a zone chairman
- Water committee met only once last year
- New WDC chairman prioritising water needs in next year's budget (after attending program)

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- Unequal distribution of materials created reluctance to contribute
- RWASH promised materials but never followed up, causing frustration:

"RWASH promised to give us additional materials, but they never came back." (NR8)

Awareness Raising:

• Video reinforced best practices in water management:

"The video helped us understand how to manage water properly."(KZ1)

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

• Some households developed their own storage systems to deal with low tide:

"Every morning, my grandchildren pump water to fill the drum so that we have clean water during low tide. They didn't use the pump during this period because I taught them this practice. These are the valuable water management skills and knowledge I acquired from the workshop." (NR9)

Banisokeo (Isabel Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

• Water committee exists but is largely inactive

• No meetings held since the chairman passed away

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- Contributions were collected in the past (SBD\$5 per household) but stopped last year.
- No financial transparency or records available

Awareness Raising:

• Announcements were made at church, but only for a short time before stopping

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Households clean around boreholes using nets and warm water
- Some community members clean their water area, while others do not.

Talise (Isabel Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- Water committee is non-functional.
- Chief handles most of the water-related matters but lacks community support

Fundraising & Water Fee:

• Households contribute \$5-\$10 per month for water maintenance, but some refuse to pay

Awareness Raising:

• Announcements made in church after Sunday services.

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Communal Health Day (Tuesdays) includes cleaning of water areas
- Water pressure improved after leaks were patched with rubber bands
- Improved water delivery enhanced sanitation improvements this has been witnessed elsewhere I Solomon Islands and Vanuatu:

"Now, some of us use the flush toilets because the pressure is good, unlike before when we used to carry water." (TA7)

Thagathaga (Isabel Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- Committee includes youth representatives to sustain engagement
- Upcoming re-election planned to replace deceased member

Fundraising & Water Fee:

• SBD\$5 fortnightly contributions in place, but treasurer has not reported on finances

"We contribute \$5 to meet maintenance costs, and you can give food if you don't have money. As a leader, I always think about the sustainability of this water system, so I emphasized this even though I see not everyone contributes." (TH5)

"I am willing to take care of the system because who else would do it? A few months ago, they gave me \$20 for my work. After that, nothing was given, but my effort never stopped." (TH11)

Awareness Raising:

• Video had impact:

"We must look after and manage our water or else we will end up like people in Africa, drinking dirty water [like in the video]."

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Water cleaning incorporated into weekly community workdays (Fridays)
- Youth group cleans storage tanks and dam, receiving food or small payments as incentives.

Banisokeo (Isabel Province)

Water Committee Changes & Strengthening:

- The water committee has been largely inactive, with only the chairman and a few members consistently working on water-related tasks
- Re-election of new members is pending, limiting the committee's effectiveness
- The chairman has not received a formal copy of the Action Plan, relying instead on notes from the intervention phase

Fundraising & Water Fee:

- SBD\$5 per household monthly contribution was introduced to support maintenance
- However, not all households contribute consistently

"The contributions are still ongoing, but not many people participate. I think the committee hasn't done much about this, so I will take responsibility. I'll remind everyone at the end of each month. Maybe they feel shy about asking for money from households, but that's our situation. I've noticed that people are willing to give, but the issue is that not all of us have money." (B4)

• The church has supported fundraising efforts by raising awareness

Awareness Raising:

- The village chairman actively reminds residents to support water contributions
- Community members who attended the RWASH workshop remembered the Action Plan and appreciated the integration of video-based learning, which helped them visualise actions rather than just discussing them:

"It provided us with clear ideas, and actions were demonstrated in the video rather than being discussed throughout the workshop."

Maintenance, Repair & Cleaning:

- Leaking pipes were repaired using spare fittings kept by the water committee chairman
- Water pipes were buried in some areas
- Some soak pits were installed by households and the water committee "I remember that burying pipes and digging soak pits were some of the planned actions. We completed those. The households inland have already dug their soak pits." (B12)
- The storage tank is cleaned monthly by the water committee team, while households are responsible for cleaning around standpipes

"For cleaning, the water committee delegates tasks. Some people wash the storage tank, while others clean the dam, and they switch roles monthly. Most times, I go on my own, but since the storage tank lid is heavy, I ask a few youths to help me. Last month, we didn't clean the storage tank, but the chairman washed the dam." (B5)

- The presence of limestone in pipes has discouraged residents from drinking the water, as they fear it may cause illness
- Illegal T-piping has decreased, suggesting some success in preventing unauthorised connections.

Summary Findings

The data highlights various water management practices and community-level involvement in different villages across the Western and Isabel Provinces of Solomon Islands. The results reveal the challenges, barriers and some of the successes surrounding the one-day EHD/RWASH follow-up monitoring and support intervention: some water committees were strengthened, fundraising efforts introduced, awareness raising undertaken, and maintenance and cleaning actions in evidence. However, results were mixed, with each village presenting unique circumstances, from active water committees with relatively new systems to those struggling with disengagement and financial difficulties and old, non-functioning systems (e.g. Kaza).

In **Baeni**, a water committee has made progress by printing WASH rules and introducing a household water fee. Despite a lack of meetings, the community appears relatively engaged through the chairman's announcements supported by occasional phone check-in from RWASH. Similarly, in **Kaza**, the election of new water committee members after a workshop led to greater inclusivity; however, financial challenges and community disengagement continue to undermine water management actions. Alongside community governance and social challenges, the dire state of the main water system is so poor in Kaza that "awareness" or follow-up support is not enough to animate even the simplest of water management (repairing leaking taps and pipes).

Lambulambu and **Nusa Roviana** highlight more successful examples of water committee activity, with consistent contributions from residents and relatively strong community participation in maintenance efforts.

In contrast, **Banisokeo** and **Talise** how more considerable difficulties with inactive water committees, financial irregularities, and sporadic awareness campaigns. In these communities, there is a lack of consistent support for the water committees, and maintenance efforts are minimal or irregular.

Overall, the data indicates that while there is a willingness among many communities to manage their water systems, challenges such as financial instability, inadequate training, and lack of resources persist. Strong leadership, consistent communication, and community involvement are key to improving these systems. These are topics touched upon in the video and discussions, but more refined and targeted engagement with these issues, informed by these results, is warranted.

Key Takeaways:

- Water committee activity varied, with some WCs being reactivated, while others remain inactive (e.g., Kaza)
- Household contributions (through fundraising or water fees) was a high priority in 5 of the 6 Action Plans, but in practice contributions were mixed, with three communities enacting some contributions, but to mixed success. Financial management is often weak and unclear with no/little reporting back to the community
- Announcements in churches are a preferred method of spreading water-related information
- Cleaning efforts are strongest in communities with structured responsibilities (e.g., Baeni, Thagathaga, Nusa Roviana, Lambulambu)
- Zone/group and tap stand caretaker approaches correlate with more active maintenance and cleaning
- WC bylaws are useless if there is no follow through enforcement from the state (e.g. Kaza)
- RWASH monitoring is valued, but not returning to complete works (e.g. Nusa Roviana) has fuelled frustration.

Discussion and Conclusion

This action research was designed to explore if, and how, structured follow-up monitoring and support to water committees and communities might support improved water system performance, longevity, and better rural WASH outcomes.

There is clear evidence that the interventions had some positive impact, but across the site's outcomes were mixed. Comparatively, it appears that the EHD follow-up may not have been as 'impactful' as the companion FBO follow-up action research activity; however, the sample size is too small to make a definitive call, and more follow-up activities and adjunct monitoring are required to better understand of this is the case or not.

The field reports and interview data provide valuable insights into the challenges associated with rural community water management across Isabel and Western Provinces. Leadership, financial management, maintenance, and communication continue to limit the effectiveness of CWM. The EHD/RWASH intervention, including the video-based awareness program, SWOT and Action Plan process, have had demonstrable impact, but sustainability will remain dependent on local governance structures and ongoing support from external agencies.

Water Committee Governance and Leadership

One of the most critical challenges across all villages is the inconsistency and, in some cases, complete inactivity of water committees. The effectiveness of these committees is strongly linked to leadership engagement and community confidence in their ability to manage finances and infrastructure. In Baeni, the WC had only met once in the past year, and financial transparency was lacking, which led to some community members being hesitant to continue to contribute. Similarly, in Kaza, the WC was initially reinvigorated after the RWASH workshop, with new members elected and the Action Plan communicated. However, over time, the momentum faded, and financial contributions became inconsistent, partly due to the treasurer moving away and the chairman's declining health.

Nusa Roviana – a large village in both size and population – displayed a fragmented approach to water management, with Zones 3 and 4 benefiting from strong local leadership and proactive maintenance, while Zones 1 and 2 struggled due to weak committee and leadership structures. One community member noted, "At first, we really worked together, but as time went on, we stopped because we were not working together anymore" (NR12). The lack of structured governance in some areas led to reduced community involvement, inadequate cleaning/maintenance, and reluctance to contribute financially. Meanwhile, Thagathaga had a more structured approach, where youth participation in the water committee ensured a level of continuity and long-term engagement.

In **Baeni**, the use of localised "tap stand caretakers" – an initiative of the WC and Action Plan – appeared effective: Tap stand caretakers have delegated specific areas around the stand tap to each household. Each household has a designated place to clean, making it an effective system because people feel ashamed if their designated area is not clean. In Nusa Roviana, Zones 3 & 4 have a structured water committee with a zone chairman and are more active than other zones. The use of micro-proximal governance regimes (having zones/groups/households responsible for discrete CWM tasks rather than a village wide committee alone) has been shown to be effective, including in regard to social inclusion (see Love et al. 2021a).

In multiple communities, aging leaders or inactive executive members contributed to slow decision-making and inaction on water-related issues. In Nusa Roviana, it was observed that the community elder serving as the overall water committee chairman was too old and slow to respond, leading to weak coordination between zone water representatives and the overall committee. A respondent from Nusa Roviana reflected on this, stating, "The leader is too old, he is slow and has no prompt actions. We need to replace him with someone younger" (NR5). This suggests that leadership succession planning is essential to maintain an active and responsive water committee

Financial Transparency and Contribution Challenges

Many communities have attempted to introduce household water contributions—five out of six identified it as an action item. However, in practice, financial contributions were inconsistent, with only three communities (including one that did not formally adopt it as an action item) implementing some form of cost-recovery

mechanism. The limited success was largely due to financial transparency issues and low trust in leadership, both of which remain significant barriers.

In **Baeni**, households were asked to contribute SBD\$2 per month, with flexibility for those unable to pay in cash to offer food instead. Despite this, only residents in Zone 2 consistently contributed, while participation in Zones 1 and 3 was sporadic. Imposing a \$2.00 household contribution encourages the maintenance of the water system. There was a view amongst some that the delay in restoring water after heavy rain was leveraging service delays to increase contributions.

Kaza faced challenges implementing financial mandates. While contributions were announced at church, collection was inconsistent, particularly after the treasurer relocated. A respondent acknowledged that the initiative "failed due to the water committee not meeting and being organised" (KZ1).

Nusa Roviana faced more severe issues with financial trust due to unequal distribution of materials. Some households received pumps and cement, while others were left out, leading to resentment and refusal to participate in future fundraising efforts. One community member noted, "RWASH promised to give those left out additional materials, but they never got back to us" (CB-NR-Z4-300624). This broken promise reinforced distrust, making it difficult for the community to mobilise resources for maintenance.

By contrast, **Lambulambu** had a relatively successful financial model, with every household contributing \$3 to fund the maintenance team. However, a lack of long-term financial planning meant that continuous small contributions were required, instead of creating a more sustainable fund for major repairs. There was a call for a shift to a \$10 contribution model, which would help the community move towards better financial stability for their water system.

In **Thagathaga**, a SBD\$5 household fortnightly water fee was introduced and is widely adhered to, bu no without some complaints with financial accountability remaining an issue, as the treasurer has not provided reports back to the community.

These cases highlight that community members may be willing to contribute—demonstrated in other contexts where trust and reliable water access exist (see Love et al., 2020). However, sustained contributions require accountable leadership practices, including regular reporting to the community, to ensure transparency and confidence in financial management.

Awareness and Communication

A key finding was the effectiveness of video-based awareness sessions in increasing community engagement, but its role in fostering actual behaviour change was mixed. In Kaza, the video had some impact, especially regarding women's roles in contributing to water management efforts. One community member reflected on the lasting impression of the video, stating, "I remember women in the video talking about how they clean their water and the contributions they make" (KZ1). This highlights how visual and participatory methods can enhance community learning and reinforce critical messages related to water stewardship.

In **Baeni**, the WC printed and publicly displayed WASH rules in key communal areas, ensuring that all residents had direct access to the guidelines. By making this information visible and easily accessible, the WC sought to increase compliance with best practices for water use and sanitation. This initiative reflects a strategic attempt to institutionalise behaviour change by embedding rules within the everyday social fabric of the community. The use of zone water representatives and tap stand caretakers shrinks the communication gap, with more proximal WASH managers able to socialise messages informally on day-to-day basis.

This was also evident in **Lambulambu**, where active zone representatives played a key role in ensuring important announcements, such as maintenance schedules and upcoming activities, were effectively communicated at the zone level. By relaying information directly to residents within their designated areas, they helped ensure that everyone remained informed, regardless of whether they attended the same church. However, timely communication about planned maintenance remains a challenge, as many villagers only find out about water shut offs too late, causing inconvenience - especially for those without water tanks. While Lambulambu has a relatively successful maintenance cost-recovery system, challenges remain in improving communication and potentially expanding responsibilities to more residents to reduce over-reliance on a small team.

Church-based announcements were a widely adopted strategy for awareness-raising, with Talise, Banisokeo, Lambulambu, and Kaza all utilising church services as platforms for disseminating WASH-related information. Given the central role of churches in many rural communities, these religious institutions serve as influential

channels for communication and collective mobilisation. The integration of WASH messaging into church gatherings underscores the intersection of faith-based leadership and community development, reinforcing the idea that water management is not just a technical or infrastructural issue but also a social and moral responsibility.

Overall, the effectiveness of these awareness and behaviour change strategies reinforces that WASH interventions must go beyond infrastructure provision alone and focus more on "software". Sustainable behaviour change requires culturally appropriate, community-driven communication approaches that engage trusted institutions and leverage diverse media and learning formats, such as videos, printed materials and group work (SWOT, Action Plans).

Maintenance, Repairs, Cleaning and Community Involvement

While some villages have adopted structured maintenance routines and self-organised cleaning schedules, issues such as leadership gaps, lack of funding, poor coordination, and limited technical capacity have hindered efforts to maintain functional and clean water infrastructure.

The field reports and interviews reveal that some communities have taken proactive steps, integrating scheduled maintenance and community-led cleaning into their routines. However, others still struggle with neglect, system breakdowns, and slow repairs, particularly where water committees are inactive or lack authority to enforce responsibilities. Household contributions, where implemented successfully, have improved access to repair funds, but many communities face financial management and trust issues, limiting their ability to sustain infrastructure.

Villages that assigned structured cleaning responsibilities to zones or households tended to have more consistent maintenance (e.g., Lambulambu, Beini). In **Baeni**, the tap stand caretakers designated specific cleaning areas to each household, leading to better accountability and a sense of pride in maintaining clean access points. One resident noted, "... people feel ashamed if their area is dirty" (in Baeni Field Report). Such peer pressure mechanisms can encourage compliance and contribute to the general upkeep of standpipes and access points. However, the perspective that Baeni's WC may have intentionally delayed repairs as a means to pressure residents into contributing financially risks alienating residents and reducing trust in the water committee's role. Furthermore, despite community-led cleaning efforts, monitoring demonstrated that some tap stands in Baeni still face neglect, and funds for large-scale maintenance remain inadequate due to irregular financial contributions from certain zones.

Some segments of **Nusa Roviana** showcased good water management, with some households taking independent action to address low water availability during low tide (NR9). However, in Nusa Roviana, some boreholes remained unfixed for extended periods. Many systems still experienced delays in maintenance due to lack of leadership engagement.

In **Kaza**, after the RWASH follow-up workshop, efforts were made to clean the system after heavy rains, particularly when blockages occurred. However, while the school sometimes took the initiative to fix pipes, it often did so without consulting the water committee, which led to damage and further complications. This highlights a broader challenge in Kaza: lack of coordination between the school, church, and water committee. A respondent suggested that:

"The school chairman should advocate and continue to remind the school community about water issues and proper ways to manage water. Sometimes, they went on to fix the pipes without the knowledge of the WC chairman or committee, leading to damage." (in Kaza-Field Report)

The lack of a structured communication channel between different stakeholders has resulted in mismanagement, uncoordinated repairs, and unintended damage to the system.

Lambulambu had one of the most structured maintenance and cleaning approaches, with a SBD\$3 per household contribution specifically for maintaining the system. This funds the maintenance team, which regularly cleans the storage tank and dam after floods and heavy rains. The success of this model lies in widespread participation. However, despite strong financial contributions, there is potentially an over-reliance on the maintenance team rather than a shared responsibility model. While some villagers are engaged, others treat the maintenance team as the sole group responsible for system upkeep, leading to frequent fundraising requests rather than a sustainable approach to long-term maintenance.

In Nusa Roviana Zones 3 and 4, where a structured committee exists, residents proactively engaged in cleaning and maintaining their boreholes with households, sharing a single borehole or water pump actively engaged in maintaining cleanliness without needing reminders from the water committee. This demonstrates that where local leadership structures are strong, maintenance efforts are more self-sustaining. However, Zones 1 and 2 lack the same structure, leading to poor water management practices. RWASH's delayed follow-up on promised materials to complete three unfinished borehole pumps has also hindered maintenance efforts (NR8), leading to community frustration and reluctance to contribute to broader maintenance efforts, highlighting the need for consistent follow-through on external commitments.

Thagathaga stands out for its strong youth engagement in water maintenance, where young people are incentivised to clean and repair water infrastructure. Weekly community workdays on Fridays now include structured water maintenance activities, ensuring that tasks are regularly completed. Despite its strong community participation, Thagathaga has experienced external threats to its water system, such as vandalism by a neighbouring community and tree damage to pipes.

Conclusion

The monitoring results reveal both progress and persisting challenges in community water management following the intervention. While many villages have taken steps to strengthen their water committees, implement household contributions, and engage in regular maintenance, challenges related to leadership inactivity and financial mistrust continue to impact sustainable CWM practices. Nevertheless, there was demonstratable impact in some of the communities, and all respondents valued the follow-up and requested more follow-up in the future. The use of telephone monitoring/follow-up by RWASH was also highly appreciated but inconsistently practiced, due to network issues in some locales (e.g., Baeni) and RWASH workload commitments.

Key lessons indicate that strong leadership succession, financial transparency, structured maintenance / cleaning responsibilities, and video-based awareness programs can positively inform community water management. Three communities instigated or revitalised water committees, increasing gender and youth engagement in the process. However, a committee by "name only" that does not actively manage and maintain their water system will not result in improved WASH outcomes, and there remained substantial challenges to maintain active and wide participation, especially regarding water fee/fundraising contributions.

For future success, the following recommendations are suggested for follow-up monitoring and support:

- 1. More systematic telephone follow-up and tracking of Action Plans by RWASH is required
- 2. Focus only on communities whose system is still functioning or able to be rehabilitated through no and low-cost contributions by the community (e.g. the system in Kaza requires replacement or major rehabilitation)
- 3. More attention needs to be paid to financial management and reporting back to communities
- Formalising church partnerships with RWASH and provincial governments could provide supplementary support to communities and water committees (including in financial management and transparency)
- 5. Water committee bylaws / rules must be enforceable in practice
- 6. WDCs and Ward Development Support Officers could be systematically trained on CWM and be provided the resources used in the *Strongem Wota Komiti* program
- 7. Ensure that Action Plans are publicly available in communities.

Follow-up monitoring and support by government or others – whether NGOs, churches or the private sector – is no substitution for the professionalisation of rural water service delivery; however, in the meantime some kind of "plus" is required to support the current CWM approach in Solomon Islands. The results of this research show both promise and challenges. We strongly recommend that, where possible, EHD/RWASH continue to conduct a follow-up monitoring and support program and monitor impact by tracking Action Plans.

References

Baumann, E. 2006. Do operation and maintenance pay? Waterlines, 25(1), 10-12.

Benjamin, C., Funubo, S., and M. Love. 2023. *Faith-based Organisations and community-based water management: Workshop report, Isabel & Western Province Solomon Isl*ands. An internal report for partners and stakeholders. International WaterCentre, Griffith University: Nathan, Australia; Solomon Islands National University: Honiara, Solomon Islands. December 2024.

Boege, V., Brown, A., Clements, K. and Nolan, A. 2008. On hybrid political orders and emerging states: What is failing-states in the global south or research and politics in the west? *Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series*, (8):15-35.

Booth, D. 2012. *Development as a collective action problem: Addressing the real challenges of African governance*. London, UK: Overseas Development Institute.

Brown, MA 2009, Human Rights and the Borders of Suffering: the Promotion of Human Rights in International *Politics*, Manchester University Press, Conflict Resolution Series, Manchester.

Cassells, R.M. 2019. Engaging with churches to address development-related challenges in Solomon Islands. *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, *16*(1).

Clements, K., Boege, V., Nolan, N, and Brown M.A. 2009. Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders', *International Peacekeeping*, 16 (5):599-615.

Day, G. 1998. Working with the grain? Towards sustainable rural and community development. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 14(1): 89-105

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). 2014. *Let's Make our Families Safe - Mekim Famili Blong Iumi Sef.* Design Document for Solomon Islands: prevention of family violence program. Australian Government. 31 January 2014. Available from: <u>https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/solomon-islands-lets-make-our-families-safe</u>

Dinnen, S. and Allen, M. 2016. State absence and state formation in Solomon Islands: Reflections on agency, scale and hybridity. *Development and Change*, 47(1):76-97.

Farran, S. 2009. *Human rights in the South Pacific: Challenges and Changes*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge-Cavendish.

Forman, C.W. 1972. Missionaries and Colonialism: the case of the New Hebrides in the twentieth century, *Journal of Church and State*, 14(1): 75-92.

Hassall, G. 1989. Religion and nation-state formation in Melanesia: 1945 to independence. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University

https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/10663/2/02Whole Hassall.pdf

Hassall, G. 2012. Faith-based organisations and social policy in Melanesia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 47(3):389-406

Hermkens, A.K., 2013. 'Raits blong mere'? Framing Human Rights and Gender Relations in Solomon Islands. Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific (33) <u>http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue33/hermkens.htm</u>

Hilliard, D., 1974. Colonialism and Christianity: The Melanesian mission in the Solomon Islands. *The Journal of Pacific History*, 9(1): 93-116.

Hutchings, P., Chan, M.Y., Cuadrado, L., Ezbakhe, F., Mesa, B., Tamekawa, C. and Franceys, R., 2015. A systematic review of success factors in the community management of rural water supplies over the past 30 years. *Water Policy*, 17(5), pp.963-983.

Hutchings, P., Franceys, R., Mekala, S., Smits, S., James, A.J., 2017. Revisiting the history, concepts and typologies of community management for rural drinking water supply in India. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 33, 152-169.

Jackson, K. and Bazeley, P. 2019. Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo. (3rd Edition). Sage Publications Ltd, CA.

Jupiter, S.D., Jenkins, A.P., Negin, J., Anthony, S., Baleinamau, P., Devi, R., Gavidi, S., Latinne, A., Mailautoka, K.K., Mangubhai, S. and Naivalu, K., 2024. Transforming place-based management within watersheds in Fiji: The Watershed Interventions for Systems Health project. *PLoS Water*, 3(7), p.e0000102

Love, M., Benjamin, C., Funubo, S., Shrestha, S., Sanderson, R., Boguro, H., Panda, N., Baker, G. and Souter, R.T., 2024. *Decentralisation and rural water service delivery in Solomon Islands: Final Report*. International WaterCentre, Griffith University: Nathan, Australia; Solomon Islands National University: Honiara, Solomon Islands. December 2024.

Love, M. and Souter, R. 2022. A Missing Link? Faith Based Organisations and rural community water management in the Pacific Islands: A scoping study with a. focus on Solomon Islands. Internal document for Water for Women Partners.

Lockwood, H, & Smits, S. 2011. Supporting rural water supply: Moving towards a service delivery approach. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and Aguaconsult, Warwickshire, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Lockwood, H. & Le Gouais, A. 2015. Professionalising community-based management for rural water services. (Briefing notes series, Building blocks for sustainability). The Hague, the Netherlands: IRC.

Love, M., Beal, C., Gonzalez-Botero, D., Bugoro, H., Panda, N., Roiko, A., Benjamin, C., Hagabore, J., Ooi, J., Magreth, C., and Souter, R.T. 2020. Pacific Community Water Management Plus: Phase 1 Findings Report for Solomon Islands. International WaterCentre / Griffith University: Brisbane, Australia; Solomon Islands National University: Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Love, M.W., Beal, C., Gonzalez, D., Hagabore, J., Benjamin, C., Bugoro, H., Panda, N., Ooi, J., Offer, C. and Souter, R.T., 2021a. Challenges and opportunities with social inclusion and community-based water management in Solomon Islands. *Development Policy Review*, 40(4),e12597. <u>https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12597</u>

Love, M., Hababore, J., Beal, C., Pene, S., Panda, N., Bugoro, H., Ravi, A., Shrestha, S., Ruuska, D., Benjamin, C.,Trina, P., Kalea, K., Funubo, S., Tanabose, L., and Souter R.T., 2021b. *Backstopping Rural Community Water Management - Lessons from Solomon Islands and Fiji. Practice & Research Brief*. December 2021. International WaterCentre / Griffith University: Brisbane, Australia; Solomon Islands National University: Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Levy, B. 2014. *Working with the grain: Integrating governance and growth in development strategies*. Oxford University Press.

McDougall, D. 2003. Fellowship and Citizenship as Models of National Community: United Church Women's Fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands', *Oceania*, 4(1-2): 61-80.

McDougall, D. 2008. Religious institutions as alternative structures in post-conflict Solomon Islands? cases from Western Province. Working/Technical Paper. Australian National University (ANU) Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA) [formerly State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) Program]. <u>10.25911/5f2004984af34</u>

Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). 2014. Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Policy. Solomon Islands Government, Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). 2015. Strategic Plan: Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2015-2020. Solomon Islands Government, Honiara.

Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). 2021. (Draft) RWASH Strategic Plan. Solomon Islands Government, Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Moriarty, P., Smits, S., Butterworth, J. and Franceys, R., 2013. Trends in rural water supply: Towards a service delivery approach. *Water alternatives*, 6(3), p.329-349.

Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (RWASH). 2019. The Solomon Islands Rural WASH Community Engagement Guidelines. Rural WASH Programme, Environmental Health Division, Ministry of Health and Medical Services. Solomon Islands Government. https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RWASH-June-2021-Newsletter-FINAL-21-7.pdf

Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (RWASH). 2021. RIS Project Database 2014-2020. Ministry of Health and Medical Services, RWASH, Solomon Islands Government.

Saldaña, J. 2013. The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. Sage Publications Ltd, CA.

Tomlinson, M and McDougall, D.L. (eds). 2013. *Christian politics in Oceania*. Berghahn Books, New York.

Whaley, L., Cleaver, F. and Mwathunga, E. 2021. Flesh and bones: Working with the grain to improve community management of water. *World Development*, 138, p.105286.

World Bank. 2017a. Sustainability Assessment of Rural Water Service Delivery Models: Findings of a Multi-Country Review. Washington DC: World Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/27988

World Health Organisation. 2022. *Guidelines for drinking-water quality: fourth edition incorporating the first and second addenda*. Geneva: https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352532/9789240045064-eng.pdf?sequence=1

Appendix 1: Interview respondents

Isabel Province – Interview respondents

Resp #	Location	Gender	Age	Role/Position
B1	Banisokeo	Female	52	Church leader
B2	Banisokeo	Female	48	Community member
B3	Banisokeo	Male	77	Community member
B4	Banisokeo	Female	32	Treasury & Secretary
B5	Banisokeo	Male	45	Water Committee Member
B6	Banisokeo	Male	62	Village Chief
B7	Banisokeo	Male	70	Community member
B8	Banisokeo	Female	50	Community member
B9	Banisokeo	Male	45	Community committee / Vice Chairman & Church Treasurer
B10	Banisokeo	Male	34	Community member
B11	Banisokeo	Male	48	Village Chairman & Vestry Chairman
B12	Banisokeo	Male	61	Community member
TH1	Tagathaga	Female	59	Water committee treasurer
TH2	Tagathaga	Female	63	Church Keeper
TH3	Tagathaga	Male	33	Community member
TH4	Tagathaga	Female	79	Community member
TH5	Tagathaga	Male	40	Village Chief
TH6	Tagathaga	Male	21	Youth
TH7	Tagathaga	Male	53	Water Committee Chairman & Catechist
TA1	Talise	Male	42	Village Headman #2 / School Chairman/ Water Committee member
TA2	Talise	Female	31	Female Village Leader/Sunday School Teacher/Kindergarten Teacher
TA3	Talise	Male		Retired Priest
TA4	Talise	Male	50	Church Chairman
TA5	Talise	Female	26	Community member
TA6	Talise	Female	24	Community member
TA7	Talise	Male	41	Village headman #3
TA8	Talise	Male	48	Community member
TA9	Talise	Female	31	Community member
TA10	Talise	Female	46	Community member
TA11	Talise	Male	23	Water Committee member-Youth

Western Province – Interview respondents

Resp #	Location	Gender	Age	Role/Position
BI1	Baeni	Male	22	Water maintenance / repair person
BI2	Baeni	Female	35	Water caretaker
BI3	Baeni	Male	61	Church Senior Deacon
BI4	Baeni	Female	40	Church Leader Support person
BI5	Baeni	Male	58	Community Advisor
BIG BIG	Baeni	Male	50	Village Chief
BI7	Baeni	Male		Vice Chairman of RWASH Committee
BI8	Baeni	Female	58	
BI9		Female	70	Village Elder
BI9 BI10	Baeni Baeni	Female	47	Community member Community member
BI10 BI11		Female	56	,
	Baeni		73	Community member
BI12	Baeni	Male	/3	Community member
BI13	Baeni	Female	40	Treasurer
NR1	Nusa Roviana	Female	50	Sunday School Teacher/UCWH Treasurer
NR2	Nusa Roviana	Male	34	Church Elder
NR3	Nusa Roviana	Male	28	Chairman RWASH/Zone 4
NR4	Nusa Roviana	Male	49	Community Helper/Supporter/WDC Member
NR5	Nusa Roviana	Male	61	Water Repair Person
NR6	Nusa Roviana	Female	46	United Church Mothers Group Member
NR7	Nusa Roviana	Male	77	Elder Chairman
NR8	Nusa Roviana	Female	59	Community Elder
NR9	Nusa Roviana	Female	50	Community member
NR10	Nusa Roviana	Female	56	Community member
NR11	Nusa Roviana	Female	47	Community member
NR12	Nusa Roviana	Female	55	Water Committee Ordinary Member
KZ1	Kaza	Female	44	Church Supervisor for Treasury Members/Primary Teacher
KZ2	Kaza	Male		Primary Teacher
KZ3	Kaza	Male	68	Community Leader
KZ4	Kaza	Male	69	
KZ5	Kaza	Male	47	Primary Teacher
KZ6	Kaza	Female	63	Senior Church Deaconess
KZ7	Kaza	Female	43	Church Deaconess
KZ8	Kaza	Female	25	Youth/community member
KZ9	Kaza	Female	32	Treasurer
LM1	Lambulambu	Male	74	Community Elder
LM2	Lambulambu	Female	60	Community Elder
LM3	Lambulambu	Male	44	Nurse
LM4	Lambulambu	Male	60	
LM5	Lambulambu	Male	64	Resource man: Church and Community project Helper/ Secretary
LM6	Lambulambu	Male	66	Church Leader/SDA Area leader
LM7	Lambulambu	Male	37	Community member
LM8	Lambulambu	Female	25	Community member
LM9	Lambulambu	Female	62	Community member
LM10	Lambulambu	Female		Village Elder/Church Leader

Appendix 3: Photos from village transects

Lambulambu







Clean tap stand

Fresh soak away

Clean outlet

Thagathaga

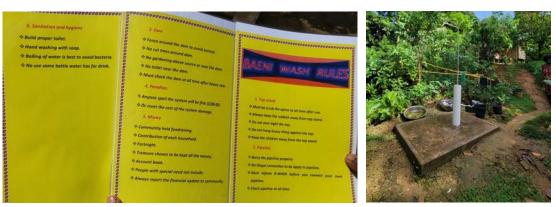


New drainage system



WC funds

Baeni



WC - Water rules

Clean tap stand

Baeni (cont.)



Water fee collection from zones

Banisokeo



soak pit

Kaza

Heeting held. 11-07-2023-Next marting, and allow August Tok Tak Save from which Committee. at field marketing. Every wednesday see Week of each relative Community and relative and each annual kog Communit are requested to support the Market. When Commuter Work formed in other de follow Christian Billy Stati V Christian Billy Stati Servery, Derkhare Moser Tacure Lithue Ment Adam Billy Tate Taca Reparable for the to Croate for tou and relative to 3. Face book page. Julin Tapitia un Fr support SA end Harths after Collecting of the 4 Reporting . every Jetox toko Jand Max Gete Billy Lula secula Conduct training and au Mash Connitte @ EHD. what should i to cancer and shared property latter shots worked property latter to per head which to be called a property in ad of work Connecte pay or to by any part of mp tag. do 7 phil while Rule - EHD 8 Cour houses towning (Community Support) Head course tools Committee & E.H.D.

WC meeting minutes











